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New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

General debate

The President *(spoke in French)*: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malta.

Mr. Borg (Malta): Mr. President, I would like to join other delegations that have preceded me in offering my congratulations and those of my delegation on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. I am convinced that your political experience and diplomatic skill will assist and guide this Assembly in its deliberations, especially in addressing important and critical issues on the international agenda.

I also congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, for the excellent manner in which he presided over the sixty-fourth session of the Assembly. Through his commitment and leadership role, Mr. Treki successfully guided the Assembly in dealing effectively with a number of priority issues facing our Organization.

I also take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his dedication and untiring efforts to ensure that our Organization lives up to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. His comprehensive report on the work of the Organization (A/65/1) indicates in no uncertain terms the progress the United Nations has made under his leadership and guidance, for which Malta is extremely grateful.

During the past 12 months, the international community has been overwhelmed by the global and financial crises. The crises have been exacerbated by many humanitarian tragedies around the world. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, armed violence and internal conflicts have continued to produce havoc, destruction, loss of life and the increased forced displacement of people worldwide. In the face of these negative realities, our Organization has continued to be the refuge of the most vulnerable and deprived of our societies, to address increasing inequalities, to respond cohesively and rapidly to disasters and calamities, and to seek to improve the very nature of the existence and survival of humankind. It is an accepted norm that there is no development without security, no security without development, and neither without respect for human rights.

Important achievements have been registered in recent months in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The new Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, designed to replace the 1991 START I agreement and signed in Prague in April by the Presidents of the United States and the Russian Federation, created the appropriate political momentum for preparing the way for a successful outcome to the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

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Malta is particularly pleased that among the agreed actions taken by the Conference was the endorsement by the NPT States parties of the convening by the Secretary-General, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, in consultation with the countries of the region, of a conference in 2012 to address the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction.

The General Assembly's resolutions recognize that positive developments worldwide, but particularly in Europe, the Maghreb and the Middle East, can be enhanced by closer Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in all spheres. Thirty-five years ago, on 1 August 1975, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe — now the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) — meeting in Helsinki, Finland, adopted the Final Act, incorporating an important chapter dedicated exclusively to the Mediterranean that affirmed, among other things, that security in the Mediterranean is closely linked to European security, as well as to international peace and security.

Malta, a European country but nonetheless Mediterranean, has worked for many years, and even since becoming a Member of this Organization, towards a Euro Mediterranean foreign policy that embraces confidence- and security-building initiatives that further enhance dialogue and understanding in our region. Indeed, my country has been present at the creation of all the Mediterranean forums in existence today. Through its membership of the European Union, Malta has solidified these efforts in a manner that promotes the ever-increasing connectedness of the European-Mediterranean partnership.

Today, Malta is the host of the European Commission-League of Arab States Liaison Office, which has formalized relations between the European Commission and the Arab world in a way that has never been done before. Indeed, Malta has translated its character as an interlocutor with a European identity and Mediterranean characteristics into the role of a political and cultural bridge to our neighbours to the North and South, and even beyond.

But our commitment to the Mediterranean dimension does not stop there. Malta continues to seize every opportunity to contribute further to this dialogue of partners. This has certainly been the case within the Union for the Mediterranean, where Malta has played an active part in ensuring that the requisite momentum is maintained despite occasional political hurdles. In the institutional domain, Malta has nominated a Deputy Secretary-General, an honour accorded to six Union members. The Maltese Deputy Secretary-General has been entrusted with the portfolio covering social and civil affairs, an area undoubtedly of vital interest to all Union partners.

Next month, Malta will host the Mediterranean Conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which will address, from a Mediterranean perspective, issues currently being debated within the OSCE in the dialogue on the future of European security. On 8 and 9 November, Malta will be the venue for the first regional conference for the Mediterranean of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. The regional conference is expected to adopt a strategy document and an action plan expressing the commitment of the Group of Friends of the Alliance to advancing goals in concrete terms in a region where intercultural dialogue and cooperation have great potential for success in overcoming the big challenges the region faces.

In the first half of 2011 Malta, a member of the Western Mediterranean Forum since 1991, intends to host the second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Forum, known as the 5+5. The convening of the Summit, the second of its kind in seven years, should, among other purposes, serve to reaffirm the relevance of the 5+5 dialogue in the current context. Malta continues to attach great value to this informal mechanism as a platform for open and frank discussion between North and South.

It is also of satisfaction to record the successful first joint International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held in Malta last February, and organized by the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. In this context I would like to recognize the importance of resolution 64/124, adopted by the General Assembly in December 2009, whereby the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, whose seat is in Malta, was granted observer status and invited to participate in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

That brings me to an issue that closely involves the Mediterranean region. I am referring to the situation in the Middle East, with the Palestinian question at its core. Malta joins other Member States in welcoming the decision reached last month between the Israelis and the Palestinians to resume direct negotiations to resolve all permanent status issues. The launching of direct negotiations on 2 September in Washington, D.C., followed by the Sharm el-Sheikh and Jerusalem meetings, has renewed the sense of urgency and expectation for the resolution of an issue that has been on the international agenda for these last 62 years. The intense and unstinting efforts made during these past few months by the Quartet, the Secretary-General and the Arab League, as well as the Israelis and Palestinians themselves, in addition to the valuable contribution of the United States Administration, have opened new possibilities for the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel. As a member of the international community, Malta will continue to play its part within the United Nations, the European Union and other international, regional and subregional forums to support the creation of the right conditions for all peoples of the Mediterranean and the Middle East to live in peace and prosperity.

This year has brought us stark reminders of the devastation and loss of life that we can expect from climate change if it continues unabated. Yet, despite such warnings, the international community has yet to adopt a sufficiently ambitious response strategy that would bind us all to contributing fairly to mitigating climate change, keeping it within manageable limits. Important steps have indeed been taken over the past two decades, but the great expectations of a decisive push forward in Copenhagen last year were not realized. Nevertheless, we must persevere on the road ahead — perhaps more pragmatically than dramatically. Copenhagen did produce several seeds of agreement that can be harvested in Cancún in December, where operational decisions could advance action on several fronts of broad interest to Member States.

Integrating the expected climatic impacts into our vision of the future is in fact a requirement for all of us, large and small. Yet the topic often lingers on the sidelines of policymaking. We must give adaptation the political and economic attention it deserves and ensure well-targeted financial support to vulnerable countries or communities most in need of it. I would also like to underline the potential of cooperative action on adaptation at regional levels, and it is in this context that Malta is supporting the Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative announced by the Prime Minister of Greece.

The protection of the human being continues to constitute a top priority for my country. In this regard, we have witnessed during the past year important developments within the United Nations that will significantly contribute to delivering results for a more just world and to putting system-wide coherence into practice. We note the progress, small but most welcome, on the discussion on the responsibility to protect. It will be recalled that five years ago, the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) called for an expansion of the United Nations capabilities for early warning and assessment of possible genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, in addition to supporting the establishment of an early warning capability. Malta therefore highly commends the interactive dialogue that took place in July and commends the initiative of the Secretary-General to set up a United Nations joint office to deal with the prevention of genocide and the wider range of crimes and violations covered by the responsibility to protect.

Another important development has been the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons (see resolution 64/293, annex). Still another aspect of human trafficking is the smuggling of human beings. The phenomenon of illegal immigration, stoked by the greed and callous operations of organized criminal groups in the Mediterranean, is putting at risk the lives of hundreds of immigrants on the threshold of Europe. Malta has for some years now been a country of destination, attracting a disproportionate influx of illegal immigrants and asylum-seekers. Malta's need for assistance in providing beneficiaries of international protection with a durable solution has been recognized by many. While Malta affirms its commitment to abiding by its international obligations, at the same time we reiterate our calls on the international community to continue to assist us in the process of resettling these unfortunate people.

While not new phenomena, piracy and armed robbery at sea against vessels continue to be an issue of grave concern for international navigation and the

safety of commercial maritime routes. Malta, as one of the leading flag States in the world, is very much concerned about the increase in the frequency and ferocity of pirate attacks on merchant ships off the coast of Somalia. It is to address that concern that we intend to promote a debate within the international community on new issues, such as piracy, in the sphere of the law of the sea which have cropped up since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982.

We intend to launch a fresh and constructive debate among like-minded States on the question of human responsibilities. Even though we are here treading on ground that may prove to be difficult, we believe that while the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual form the cornerstone of a free and democratic society, so do human responsibilities. Rights and duties are two sides of the same coin. Our commitment to duties should be as firm as that to rights. Stressing the rights of society and our duties towards others — which in no case should overshadow our attention to the rights of the individual — puts emphasis on that which keeps society together. Malta shall take up this matter to achieve a measure of progress in this field in the international community.

Before concluding, allow me to pay a tribute in memory to President Guido de Marco, one of my predecessors, who as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and as President of Malta, bestowed honour on his country and the people of Malta, which he loved dearly. His passing away last month left a great void not only among the Maltese population, but also for the many who worked with him for the betterment of those in the international community who are oppressed, weak and vulnerable.

Twenty years ago, this Assembly elected him to serve as President at the forty-fifth session. His strong belief in and steadfast support of the United Nations can be encapsulated in his own words at the opening plenary of the session on 18 September 1990 when, in referring to the enormous challenges that lay ahead, he stated that

> "equally enormous is the political will to guarantee that mankind's destiny is safeguarded not only by individual countries, but by a strong United Nations" (A/45/PV.1, p. 22).

His election as President ushered in, among other things, new initiatives for the revitalization of our General Assembly — a legacy that has continued and continues today. By following Guido de Marco's vision for and love of the United Nations, my country shall continue supporting this Organization and its Secretary-General to make our world a better place for present and future generations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I join in the tribute to former General Assembly President Guido de Marco expressed by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malta.

I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abubakr Al Qirbi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Qirbi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, on behalf of the Government of Yemen, I am pleased to express to you our warm congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. We are confident that your abilities and wisdom, Sir, will lead to the success of this session in fulfilment of its desired goal.

I also wish to refer with appreciation and pride to the good work of Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, the previous President of the General Assembly, and congratulate him for his tireless efforts that led the previous session to a successful conclusion, not the least of which was his participation in the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We also wish to thank His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his continuous efforts to reform our Organization and increase its role in the humanitarian and development fields and in the achievement of international peace and security.

The Republic of Yemen is witnessing complex development and political, social and environmental challenges. A number of factors and circumstances have led to their formation, including the international financial crisis, with its negative effect on the Yemeni economy, and a decline in our progress towards the achievement of the MDGs. There is a severe shortage of available resources owing to the low production and low price of oil, on which the Government depends as a main source of income, representing 75 per cent of its general income. There has also been a decline in remittances from expatriates and in tourism, in addition

to overpopulation, paucity of water resources, and limited contributions from development partners for funding anti-poverty programmes and providing decent standards of living for our citizens.

Yemen's pro rata share of official development assistance (ODA) is the lowest of the least developed countries in the world. With a view to achieving economic development and conducting financial and economic reforms, my country has recently concluded an agreement with the International Monetary Fund to implement a programme that will lead to financial straightening out of the budget deficit and stem the progressive decline in Government level of support for fuel in a manner that would contribute to alleviating the general budgetary burden falling on the State.

A number of administrative, financial and judiciary reforms have been adopted, as have efforts to combat corruption and to apply decentralization of power. My Government is now trying to develop its fourth five-year development plan for the years 2011-2015. We have started a political dialogue with opposition parties in order to find agreement on how to address all the challenges faced by Yemen. We have set up election laws and introduced a number of constitutional reforms, called for the formation of a National Unity Government, in preparation for conducting parliamentary elections next April.

Last week, there were a number of meetings in New York on a new initiative regarding cooperation with Yemen, under the name of Friends of Yemen. Participants included representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the European Union, the five permanent members of the Security Council, along with Turkey, Jordan and Egypt, as well as international donor funds and institutions. The purpose of the meeting was to garner support for our efforts to achieve development and combat extremism, terrorism and piracy. We are confident that this cooperation will strengthen our security capabilities to carry out our development plans, reinforce our ability to combat terrorism and protect sea lanes in the Gulf of Aden and the southern part of the Red Sea from piracy and protect our borders.

Among the challenges Yemen has faced are the difficult political developments following a rebellion in the Governorate of Sa'dah, which has complicated the Government's efforts at achieving national peace and reconstruction. This rebellion, in addition to six wars imposed on Yemen, have caused the displacement of tens of thousands of citizens and forced the establishment of refugee camps in coordination with international relief organizations. The conflict came to an end once the rebel group accepted the six conditions that the Government posed, including the release of a great number of prisoners and agreeing to the Doha Accords, the time frame and implementation of which, as sponsored by sisterly Qatar, we are in the process of carrying out. The Government has responded by peacefully reaching out to the rebels, while upholding the principle of sovereignty and the rule of law throughout the country. The country upheld the right to confront any groups that violate the Constitution and the rule of law, or that practise terrorism, violence or sabotage.

My country is also suffering from the terrorist activities of Al-Qaida, which has been carrying out new operations, such as assassinating leaders in our security sector. It is trying to entrench its position on the Arabian Peninsula by cooperating with opponents to Yemeni unity, such as the southern secessionists, who call for secession in defiance of the will of the majority of the Yemeni people. They also support subversive elements in Sa'dah, in service of the interests of Al-Qaida, and seek to spread instability and anarchy in the country through their terrorist activities targeting Yemen, the region and the rest of the world.

Our security apparatus has managed to make headway in arresting many terrorists and aborting their operations. These terrorists now live in a state of fear and are unable to carry out their terrorist plans. As a complement to the efforts to liquidate Al Qaida, there remains a pressing and important need to build and foster national abilities and coordinate intelligence and security activities.

Experience has proven that outside interference designed to combat terrorism further compounds the situation and paves the way for local sympathy for terrorist groups. Yemen is an effective partner with the international community in combating terrorism. Our success today in waging pre-emptive strikes against Al-Qaida requires that the international community take a strong stand by providing us with its full backing and support.

Since its assumption of the chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China, the Republic of Yemen has enthusiastically and willingly tried to reach consensus

on a number of issues of interest to the Group and that will maintain the unity and solidarity of the Group and further its relations with the developed countries. Recently, Yemen led the difficult negotiations to arrive at the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals (resolution 65/1), which contains a work programme for the coming five years. Yemen's leadership of the Group enabled it to achieve much of the South's agenda, which serves the interests of all developing countries. It is leading other, highly complex negotiations on conventions having to do with the environment and climate change.

We are proud to have chaired the meetings of the Group of 77 and China on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Our effective participation in the work of the relevant committees has led to a compromise and middle ground that we hope will lead to the success that has thus far remained out of reach.

We must focus on the suffering of more than 20 million Pakistanis caused by the recent floods, calling on the international community, particularly the super-Powers, to shoulder their responsibilities towards the Pakistani people as well as their responsibility vis-à-vis the impact of climate change in the future and its potential destructive effects. We call upon all Member States to responsibly stand by the sisterly Government of Pakistan with a view to alleviating the suffering of its internally displaced persons.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our warmest condolences to the Governments and peoples of States that have recently been affected by natural disasters, particularly Pakistan, China, the Russian Federation and Haiti.

It is, of course, a fact that the Arab-Israeli conflict threatens international stability and security. The history of efforts to solve this conflict shows clearly that Israeli recalcitrance and the Israeli Government's settlement policies, as well as its refusal to abide by the internationally legitimate resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative or ensure the legitimate rights of the Palestinians are the main barriers to the achievement of peace.

The international community, in particular the main sponsors of the peace talks and especially the United States, should give Israel one last chance to abide by all of the resolutions, previous agreements and calls relating to the promulgation of peace in addition to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State on its soil and the cessation of settlement-building. Furthermore, if Israel continues to reject peace, the Security Council should impose a solution to the conflict in accordance with relevant resolutions of international legitimacy and under Chapter VII of the Charter. Israel must also accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and enter into serious talks with the International Atomic Energy Agency aimed at making the Middle East a region free from weapons of mass destruction and to assert the right of States in the region to the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

Despite the numerous meetings of the Security Council and the International Contact Group on Somalia, the situation in Somalia remains dangerous and threatening to the security and stability of the region. It is regrettable that, given the growing piracy phenomenon, its expansion and its threat to international navigation, the international community has not taken effective steps to support the temporary Somali Government, enable it to build its State and institutions, support its security capacity and army and support the African peacekeeping force. This has made the Somali Government and people feel embittered, having witnessed the non fulfilment by the international community of its commitments and obligations to the Somali Government.

Yemen bears the burden of the outflow of thousands of refugees from the Horn of Africa, most of whom are from Somalia. We are well aware of the effects of the security, political and humanitarian situation in Somalia on Yemen and the region. The United Nations and the Security Council in particular should shoulder their responsibility to restore security and stability to Somalia.

Here, we acknowledge the efforts of the Sudanese Government to bring about the success of dialogue with the opposition forces, and we commend the Qatari mediation efforts to achieve peace in Darfur and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the South. Dialogue is the only means to maintain the unity of the Sudan and achieve security and stability there. We call upon all Sudanese parties to shoulder their responsibilities and to effectively participate in the dialogue in a manner that fulfils the high national

interests of the Sudanese people and retains their social integrity and unity.

We call for the revocation of the International Criminal Court warrant against his Excellency President Omer Al Bashir, since this does not respect the sovereignty of the State and impedes efforts to achieve peace in the Sudan.

The parliamentary elections in Iraq reflected the Iraqi people's support for the democratic option and the Iraqi Constitution. We are confident that they will employ dialogue to solve all of their differences and avoid all sectarian and factional conflicts and disputes. We are hopeful that the Iraqi national leadership will agree to the formation of the Government and put Iraq on the road towards development, construction and stability.

The Republic of Yemen hosted a ministerial meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations at the beginning of last month. At that meeting, it was reiterated that it was necessary to strengthen cooperation among its member States in the fields of trade, investment, tourism, culture and education, fisheries; and efforts to combat epidemics, natural disasters, the challenges of climate change and piracy on the high seas.

We also hosted the extraordinary ministerial meeting of the Sana'a Forum for Cooperation, emphasizing the need to achieve security and stability in the Horn of Africa and the south of the Red Sea, and to combat extremism, piracy and terrorism in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Sea.

We have hosted these and other ministerial and regional meetings based on our desire to achieve collective cooperation in order to maintain peace and security among the peoples of the region and the world, in accordance with the lofty goals of the United Nations.

Despite all the appeals to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the humanitarian themes included in the Goals, the international situation, which has been affected by the financial crisis, the fluctuation of energy prices and natural disasters leading to increases in the price of crops and other foodstuffs, has dissuaded developed countries from fulfilling their obligations to assist and support the least developed countries. There is fear that the specified time frame for achieving the MDGs will pass and the developed countries will not fulfil their obligations towards the developing and least developed countries.

In Yemen, we have positively dealt with these Goals in accordance with our limited capacity. Our Government has adopted a national strategy to eradicate poverty. This has been reflected in our national development plans. We are trying our best, with the cooperation of the international community, to implement this strategy. Our Government has taken a number of measures to increase the allocation of budgetary funds for education and to build more schools as well as to enhance the educational cadres, developing primary education, encouraging education for girls and widening the scope of adult illiteracy reduction. We are trying to improve gender equality and the empowerment of women to participate in political life. We have provided health care for mothers and children, spreading cultural and health awareness. This has led to low infant mortality rates. We have conducted health campaigns to eliminate epidemics and the spread of AIDS.

Yemen suffers from scarce water resources and overpopulation, which adversely affect the sustainability and soundness of the environment. We have therefore made national plans to study the situation, better understand the problems, and protect the environment as part of our national plans for development.

We have spent a great deal on imposing the rule of law and on combating terrorism and other subversive elements. We have taken in more than 700,000 refugees from the Horn of Africa, which has limited our expenditure on development and poverty reduction, on improving the standards of living of our citizens, on providing employment for our youth, on improving education and health care and on the achievement of the MDGs. We therefore call on our friends, partners, international donors and international organizations and financial institutions to help us combat terrorism. They must fulfil their obligations and extend the necessary support to Yemen to help us achieve sustainable development and the socio-economic and political stability to which we aspire.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Avigdor Liberman, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel.

Mr. Liberman (Israel): When I arrived yesterday in New York, I received a phone call from the chairman of one of the Jewish organizations, who asked me how I was coping with all the pressure that is being placed on Israel. "Surely", he said, "it must be very difficult". I recalled an old joke, which tells of five Jews who changed the way we see the world: Moses, law is everything; Jesus, love is everything; Marx, money is everything; Freud, sex is everything; and Einstein, everything is relative. So, I told him that everything is relative. On one hand, it is very difficult. On the other hand, it is easier than before, because now we have a stable coalition and a stable Government and we have the support of a majority of Israel's citizens. We are ready for a fair solution and we are ready to cooperate with the international community. However, we are not ready to compromise our national security or the vital interests of the State of Israel.

At the outset, I want to emphasize that, contrary to what is often presented in the international media, the political arena in Israel is not divided between those who seek peace and those who seek war. Everyone wants peace, and the controversy in Israel centres on the specific question of how to achieve this peace, how to reach security and stability in the region. And the question is: why, in the 17 years since we signed the Oslo Accords, have we not arrived at a comprehensive agreement signifying the end of the conflict and the removal of future mutual claims?

Despite all of the efforts of all the good people with the best of intentions, including Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu, Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert; despite the summit meetings at Camp David between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat with the presence of former President Bill Clinton; and despite the Annapolis Summit between Ehud Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas, we are today still in deadlock.

In fact, contrary to the prevalent view that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the heart of the instability in the Middle East or is the main reason for the region's numerous conflicts, the reality is entirely different. More than 90 per cent of the wars and war victims of the Middle East since the Second World War did not result from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and are in no way connected to Israel. Rather, they stem from conflicts involving Muslims or conflicts between Arab States. The Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf war, the wars between North and South Yemen, the Hama atrocities in Syria, and the wars in Algeria and Lebanon — these are just a few examples from a list that goes on and on.

The second flawed explanation for the long-standing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians that has gained popularity is that the root of the problem is the so-called occupation, the settlements in Judea and Samaria and the settlers themselves. Only the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, so the argument goes, will ensure peace in the region.

It is sufficient to state a number of well-known facts in order to refute that claim. First, all of Judea, Samaria and Gaza were under Arab control for 19 years, between 1948 and 1967. During those 19 years, no one tried to create a Palestinian State. Peace agreements were achieved with Egypt and Jordan, despite the presence of settlements. And the opposite is also true: we evacuated 21 flourishing settlements in Gush Katif and transferred more than 10,000 Jews. And, in return, we have Hamas in power and thousands of missiles landing on Sderot and southern Israel.

Another misguided argument is the claim that the Palestinian issue prevents a determined international front against Iran. This argument is not only flawed, it is completely irresponsible. The same argument could be made that the Palestinian issue prevents action on North Korea, piracy in Somalia, the humanitarian crisis in Sudan or the challenge of Afghanistan.

Just as the Khomeini Revolution had nothing to do with the Palestinian issue, neither is the Iranian decision to develop nuclear weapons related. In truth, the connection between Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is precisely the contrary. Iran can exist without Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hizbullah, but the terrorist organizations cannot exist without Iran. Relying on those proxies, Iran can, at any given time, foil any agreement between Israel and the Palestinians or with Lebanon.

Thus, in searching for a durable agreement with the Palestinians, one that will deal with the true roots of the conflict and will endure for many years, one must understand that, first, the Iranian issue must be resolved. One must deal first with the root cause of the problem, and not its symptoms. There are, of course, yet other problems that must be solved; solving that one would not be sufficient, but it is nevertheless a necessary condition.

In trying to resolve the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, we are dealing with two types of problems: emotional problems and practical problems. That is why the solution must also be a two-stage one.

The emotional problems are, first and foremost, the utter lack of confidence between the sides and issues such as Jerusalem, recognition of Israel as the nation-State of the Jewish people, and refugees. Under those conditions, we should focus on coming up with a long-term intermediate agreement, something that could take a few decades. We need to raise an entire new generation that will have mutual trust and will not be influenced by incitement and extremist messages. To achieve a final status agreement, we must understand that the primary practical obstacle is the friction between the two nations.

As is true everywhere, where there are two nations, two religions or two languages with competing claims to the same land, there is friction and conflict. Countless examples of ethnic conflict around the world confirm this, whether in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Africa, the Far East or the Middle East. Where effective separation has been achieved, conflict has either been avoided or has been dramatically reduced or resolved. Consider the cases of the former Yugoslav republics, the split-up of Czechoslovakia and the independence of East Timor as cases in point. Thus, the guiding principle for a final status agreement must not be land-for-peace but rather, exchange of populated territory. Let me be very clear: I am not speaking about moving populations, but rather about moving borders to better reflect demographic realities.

This is not an extraordinary insight and is far less controversial than some may seek to claim. In fact, precisely this notion — that a mismatch between borders and nationalities is a recipe for conflict — has long been accepted as a virtual truism in the academic community. Leading scholars and highly respected research institutions have even coined the term "right-sizing the State" to capture the idea that States and nations must be in balance in order to ensure peace. This is not a controversial political policy. It is an empirical truth.

But beyond empirical truth there is historical truth, namely, the almost 4,000 years during which the Jewish people were born in the land of Israel and developed the corpus of ethical and intellectual treasures that have been instrumental in the rise of Western civilization. The 2,000 years of forced exile and interim conquest by Byzantines, Arabs, Mamelukes, Ottomans and others cannot and never will impair the unbreakable bonds of the Jewish people to its homeland. Israel is not only where we are, it is who we are.

In closing, let me remind everyone in this Hall of the quote on the plaza across from the United Nations, words spoken in Jerusalem almost 3,000 years ago by the Jewish prophet Isaiah:

> "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (*Isaiah 2:4*)

Inspired by the deep wisdom embodied in these words, let us hope that the path to true peace prophesied by Isaiah will guide our two peoples, in two nation-States, living in peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hor Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Hor (Cambodia): At the outset, allow me to join the previous speakers in expressing my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Joseph Deiss of Switzerland on his election as President of the sixty-fifth session of our General Assembly. I am confident that under his able leadership our Assembly will be crowned with significant progress on many global issues of international concern. Likewise, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki for the professionalism and dedication with which he conducted the previous session of our General Assembly.

This sixty-fifth session is particularly significant, combining in a timely manner two important high-level meetings, namely, the high-level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the High-level Review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Those important meetings remind us that there is no better entity than the United Nations to address global challenges and that multilateralism is relevant in addressing the world's interconnected and proliferating

challenges, including the global economic and financial crisis, climate change, food security, international peace and security, regional conflicts and others.

The global economic and financial storm seems to be over, but the task of restoring confidence and promoting economic recovery is far from complete and remains a daunting task, especially for the developing countries. However, achievement of the MDGs is uncertain owing to the fragile economic recovery of those countries. Failure to meet the MDGs by 2015 will leave millions of people locked in the cycle of poverty. Therefore, as the economic recovery continues, a joint effort towards concrete action is needed to further boost confidence and maintain the momentum of global economic growth.

In Cambodia we adopted our own MDGs in 2003, known as Cambodian MDGs and have thus achieved the MDG targets on reducing child mortality and HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. According to a recent study issued by the Overseas Development Institute and the United Nations Millennium Campaign, Cambodia ranks among 20 countries that have made the most absolute progress on the MDGs.

Our world today is facing most serious global challenges. Climate change presents a major threat for every country, although it is more severe for poor countries. Daily, we see an increase in headline news and reports on chaotic weather occurring worldwide, with record heat and cold waves, unusual torrential rains leading to apocalyptic floods and landslides and mudslides that kill hundreds and displace millions of people. Intense forest fires resulting from to extreme heat indicate that Mother Nature is raging.

The confluence of those natural calamities also means that the agricultural sector, which depends largely on weather, has been hit most often, resulting in adverse impacts on food security. All those events have aggravated poverty and led to increased illegal immigration, which has already become a serious human security problem.

Although the much awaited summit of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen last year failed to achieve a binding agreement, it established a good foundation at the least to enhance international cooperation on a number of key issues, such as deforestation, renewable energy and financial support for the world's poorest countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change. We regret, however, that the pledges have not been actualized.

It is still uncertain whether a binding agreement will be secured in Cancún this year. In particular, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities for developed and developing nations should serve as the foundation for negotiations. Such a principle is key to rebuilding mutual trust among nations, which is the most urgent task needed to achieve a meaningful result at the Cancún Conference. The spirit of compromise is absolutely necessary for the sake of humanity. Climate change has already reached a point of no return.

Cambodia urges developed countries to honour their commitments to provide financial and technological aid to developing nations for the fight against climate change and to take the lead and cut their respective carbon dioxide emissions, so that the Conference in Cancún can produce tangible results. Fruitful outcomes in Cancún will depend on efforts by all to save humankind from much more serious catastrophes. Climate change is not a vital problem of only one country or one region, but of the world as a whole.

Cambodia is pleased to join the group of countries for implementation of the Copenhagen Accord. We have launched our own initiative called the Cambodian Climate Change Alliance, which focuses on capacity-building and strengthening national institutions. Cambodia has also steadily implemented projects aimed at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and will continue to assume its share of responsibility in curbing carbon dioxide emissions and bringing about adaptation and mitigation measures.

Cambodia believes that the problem of food security also deserves great attention. At the World Summit on Food Security in November 2009 it was disclosed that the number of hungry people had already reached 1 billion. That number will certainly increase day by day with the augmentation of the world population, thus further aggravating food security in the world, particularly in the poorest countries.

The lack of financial resources devoted to agriculture, the lack of access to agrotechnologies and the irrational use of water resources are among the catalysts of the food crisis. At the same time, as a result of recent high fuel oil prices, agricultural land has been diverted to grow bioenergy crops to meet increasing

demand for fuel, while the world population needs more and more food. Furthermore, official development assistance (ODA) has not been sufficiently focused on agricultural production. Therefore, Cambodia hopes that the international community will turn its attention to redirecting and increasing ODA to emphasize food security. At the same time, adequate and timely measures must be taken to address the various obstacles to food security, in order to avoid recurrence of food crises in the future.

In this context, the pledge of $20 billion over three years made at the 2009 Group of Eight Summit in L'Aquila to support agricultural production in poor countries was extremely opportune and offered much hope, not only with regard to narrowing the food shortage but also for progress towards the MDGs and poverty reduction in general. Still, respecting that commitment through timely disbursement and efficient utilization of that funding are absolutely essential. Within Cambodia, food production is the top priority of our Government policy, and agriculture and irrigation are being aggressively promoted as a springboard for broader economic development, with the ambition of turning Cambodia into a more important rice-exporting country.

Peace and security remain issues of grave concern in many parts of the world. Terrorism remains a very serious threat to the world, killing innocent people every day in many parts of the world. The regional security landscape in Asia and the Middle East constitutes a concern for the international community, compelling us to be ever vigilant.

The situation in the Korean peninsula still presents a threat to peace and security in that region. Cambodia earnestly calls on the parties to refrain from any act that could escalate tensions, with a view to promoting conditions that could enable the Six-Party Talks to resume as soon as possible. Peace will prevail only as a result of negotiations aimed at re-establishing the confidence necessary to a peaceful Korean peninsula.

The Israeli-Palestinian issue remains one of the longest and most explosive running conflicts in the Middle East. Year after year the Palestinian people are denied their right to establish a Palestine State living side by side in peace with the people of Israel. Year after year this Assembly urges the parties concerned to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions, while the whole world waits impatiently for a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Cambodia urges both parties to act with utmost restraint and to avoid any act of provocation, in order to pave the way for a peaceful solution.

Cambodia warmly welcomes the recent direct peace talks between the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian President in Washington and in Egypt, as a step in the right direction for bolstering an atmosphere of trust between the two sides. Cambodia shares the view of the international community that new settlements in the West Bank present the main obstacle to efforts towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Cambodia hopes that both sides can finally look for a compromise on this crucial issue in order to achieve a breakthrough for the sake of a lasting peace in the Middle East.

With regard to the embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, Cambodia firmly supports the resolutions of our Assembly on the necessity of ending that embargo and calls upon all Members of the United Nations to implement those resolutions in order to end the prolonged suffering of the innocent people of Cuba.

Mr. MacDonald (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Given the very serious emerging global challenges, the United Nations must be ready to fulfil its growing responsibilities to tackle those complex worldwide issues. The functioning of every organ of the United Nations should be readjusted and reinvigorated so as to effectively manage the complexity of the world today to overcome all the challenges in order to build a suitable world for all. Regarding the reform of the United Nations Security Council, Cambodia is of the view that priority should be given to increasing the representation of developing countries, which comprise a vast majority of the United Nations membership. For many years, many have raised the matter of reform, but unfortunately particular interests have prevailed over the world's concerns and prevented the reform from taking place.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Theodore Brent Symonette, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Symonette (Bahamas): On behalf of the Government and people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, I congratulate Mr. Joseph Deiss on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, and I assure him of my country's and my delegation's full support and cooperation. I also extend sincere congratulations to his predecessor for his stewardship of this Assembly during the sixty-fourth session.

I also take this opportunity to express condolences on behalf of the Government and the people of the Bahamas to the Government and people of Pakistan for the loss of lives and property sustained as a result of devastating floods affecting their region. The Government and the people of the Bahamas stand in solidarity with Pakistan.

One of the greatest challenges of the global economic and financial crisis has been the loss in speed towards achieving the development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. We are encouraged by the decline in the number of people living in absolute poverty and the reported increased access to primary and secondary education for some. We are mindful that high levels of infant mortality, unsatisfactory reduction in the rate of maternal mortality, continued high incidences of sexual violence against women and a rise in the prevalence of HIV continue to persist in many countries.

The World Health Organization forecasts that between 2006 and 2015, deaths from non-communicable diseases will increase worldwide by some 17 per cent. The increasing risks and high prevalence of non-communicable diseases are exacting heavy tolls on finances and health systems of countries like the Bahamas. Hence we welcome the adoption of resolution 64/265, which calls for a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly next September to address the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

The Bahamas continues to pledge the highest priority on attaining and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We fully expect to achieve most if not all of the goals and targets identified. Still, we are not out of the woods. The fallout from the global economic and financial crisis continues to impact the chief engine and principal employer in our country, tourism, and to slow recovery and expansion in other segments of our economy. My Government has accelerated the implementation of a planned programme of national infrastructure upgrade and expansion, with a view to upgrading the country's infrastructure in order to accommodate new growth and development when the global economy rebounds.

We believe it is critical that greater attention be given to achieving a more transparent international credit rating system that takes fully into account the needs and concerns of developing countries. Greater participation by developing countries is also required in key international norm- and standard-setting bodies in financial regulation and supervision, including the Financial Stability Board and the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision. It is also our view that there is an important role for the United Nations in this process, particularly in the area of institutional strengthening.

We are pleased by the considerable progress made in enhancing our social safety net, expanding unemployment benefits and introducing a national prescription drug programme designed to ensure that the most vulnerable sectors of our society — infants and school-age children, and the elderly — receive prescription medication, regardless of their ability to pay. And we are also pleased that, notwithstanding forced reductions in Government expenditures across the board, every child in the Bahamas continues to be assured of a place in Government-operated schools, from primary to high school.

Overshadowing our successes is the ever-present threat posed by climate change. The Bahamas is the fifth most vulnerable country to rising sea levels. We are a country of negligible greenhouse gases and negligible gas emissions; still, we will suffer catastrophic results if emissions are not stabilized and reduced worldwide. Indeed, science demonstrates that a two degree Celsius change in temperature will result in a sea-level rise of more than two metres. Such an occurrence would submerge 80 per cent of our territory.

The Bahamas therefore joins with other small island developing States (SIDS) in reiterating the call to the international community, and particularly to developed countries, to undertake urgent and decisive action to significantly reduce emissions of all greenhouse gases, and also to implement fast action strategies. We similarly call for increased financial and technological support of SIDS, and our particularly vulnerable countries, as we struggle to adapt to the

adverse impacts of climate change. As such, we look forward with considerable anticipation to the December Conference in Cancún.

The Bahamas draws attention to the importance of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as that programme remains the blueprint for action on sustainable development for SIDS, as was subsequently reaffirmed in the Mauritius Strategy. In the Bahamas we have an unwavering political commitment to sustainability as the cardinal principle for national development strategies. And in the area of biodiversity, significant achievements have been made in establishing and expanding marine, coastal and terrestrial protected areas. We are also well along with the development of a national energy policy, with potential for renewable energy.

It is impossible for my country to note the high incidence of catastrophic natural disasters being experienced around the world and not acknowledge the plight of our great neighbour, Haiti. Haiti and its people are a priority concern for the Bahamas and the Caribbean Community subregion, as they are for the entire international community. None of us, however, were under any illusion that the recovery and reconstruction of Haiti, in the wake of the devastating January earthquake, would be anything less than a Herculean task. In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, billions of dollars were pledged and the wider community of nations vowed to stay the course and work to ensure that Haiti gained a footing on the path to sustainable growth and development.

There has been some progress in Haiti over the past nine and a half months — but not nearly enough. Millions of internally displaced people continue to languish in makeshift tent cities, with inadequate shelter or protection, and most of the rubble from that January earthquake still lies where it fell. It is imperative, therefore, that the United Nations continue in its pivotal role of mobilizing international assistance for Haiti and assisting with the recovery and reconstruction.

International peace and security remain a concern to all of us. The recently held second review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy underscored that we must renew our efforts to combat terrorism in an effective and integrated manner. I reiterate my Government's commitment to full implementation of the Strategy and renew the call for completion of negotiations on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. The Bahamas is a full partner in the international fight to combat terrorism and other transnational criminal activities. We currently serve as Chair of the Inter American Committee against Terrorism. We were also pleased to host this past June a subregional workshop on counter-terrorism financing, organized by the Organization of American States in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

The Security Council is central to international efforts aimed at fostering peace and improving security around the globe. We believe that the Council's efforts in this regard would be strengthened if its composition better reflected the geopolitical realities of the world. Towards that end, the Bahamas lends its voice to the call for increased urgency in efforts to make the Security Council more representative, accountable, democratic and transparent.

Crime and threats to security continue to occupy the minds of the people of the Bahamas and indeed of the Caribbean subregion. International traffic in illicit drugs and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons have for many years disrupted the lives of peace-loving citizens of the Caribbean. Governments like my own have been required to dedicate increased portions of our annual budgets to the fight against crime. The seemingly unlimited resources of the illegal cartels continue to render our efforts insufficient. Hence, we look forward with anticipation to the 2012 Conference, whose objective is the conclusion of an arms trade treaty. We fully endorse, in that regard, calls from fellow Caribbean countries for the treaty to be comprehensive in scope, with provisions for all categories of weapons.

My Government also confirms its commitment to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We were pleased with the outcome document of the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States (A/CONF.192/BMS/2010/3), which was adopted by consensus in June.

I record the appreciation of my Government for the technical assistance recently received from the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean in the area of firearms destruction and stockpile

management. We look forward always to assistance in the future.

The Bahamas applauds the General Assembly's proclamation of the year beginning on 12 August 2010 as the International Year of Youth, under the theme of dialogue and mutual understanding. We believe that the overwhelming majority of our young people are creative and law-abiding citizens. They will doubtless contribute and be a credit to their community and their country. Regrettably, however, a significant minority, not unlike troubled youth throughout the world, find it difficult to overcome the challenges presented by poverty, weak educational achievement, risky social behaviours, including drug and alcohol abuse, criminal activity and rising unemployment.

A recent report of the International Labour Organization found that young people aged 15 to 24 accounted for 22 per cent of the increase in the number of unemployed persons since the beginning of 2007. My Government is therefore seeking to further expand educational programmes and career-oriented training opportunities for our youth by enhancing our secondary school curriculum and by strengthening the programmes available at the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute.

The Bahamas welcomes efforts by the Organization to continue to bring focus to women's issues. We applaud the adoption of resolution 64/289, which established a new gender entity — UN Women.

We also applaud the recent launch of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Human trafficking is a growing phenomenon in our region and is increasingly a challenge for us in the Bahamas, as we are an archipelagic nation with porous borders. My Government is therefore committed to combating that activity and to intercepting and prosecuting to the fullest extent of the law those engaged in it.

Building on its ratification in 2008 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the Bahamas enacted child protection and trafficking legislation specially designed to work on counter-trafficking. We are fortunate that financing has been made available to representatives of relevant Government agencies and key stakeholders.

The Bahamas believes that the United Nations is working diligently under its mandate to facilitate increased international dialogue, realizing the noble goals set out in its Charter. The Bahamas has taken note of the Secretary-General's announcement of a High-level Panel on Global Sustainability as a blueprint for a liveable, prosperous and sustainable future for all.

My delegation fully endorses the Secretary-General in his assertion that the time for narrow agendas and narrow thinking is over. As an Organization, we must continue to chart a course that will enable us to meet unprecedented global challenges and translate our efforts into actions for the benefit of all. The rhetoric must become reality. We all have a contribution to make in realizing the goals and objectives of the United Nations, based on the purposes and principles outlined in the Charter.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Win (Myanmar) (*spoke in Burmese; English text provided by the delegation*): May I, on behalf of the Myanmar delegation and on my own behalf, begin by extending to the President our warm congratulations on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. We are confident that under his wise and able leadership our deliberations will produce fruitful results. Allow me also to express my delegation's appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

There is no doubt that the United Nations is the best forum for practising multilateralism to address the challenges facing the world today. The near-universal participation of the world's nations in this global body is a living testimony to that. At the heart of its Charter lies the maintenance of international peace and security as the main noble purpose of the United Nations, which all Member States are committed to strive for.

While the United Nations has been devoting the larger portion of its attention to maintaining international peace and security, new forms of global challenges such as climate change, poverty, hunger, water and energy insecurity have emerged and demand the international community's urgent and careful attention. At the same time, humankind's shared dream of making the world a prosperous, peaceful, just and

secure place remains elusive. The world today remains full of inequality, injustice, conflict, instances of the use of force, interference in the internal affairs of States and attempts to impose domination on developing nations.

Against that backdrop, the pre-eminent role of the United Nations in advancing peace, security and development must be asserted and enhanced in order to effectively address those daunting challenges. We therefore wish to stress the pressing need for strengthening the United Nations with speedy reform measures, adapting it to present-day realities in order to make it more democratic and effective in meeting growing challenges.

Myanmar firmly believes that any reform effort must be aimed at strengthening the central role of the United Nations in global governance. We share the widespread view that the United Nations must be reformed to reflect its increasing membership and to push for internal reform measures, including revitalization of the General Assembly and reform of the Security Council. We share the view that the reform of the Council must be designed to make it more transparent, more efficient and more accountable. We also support the idea of expanding both categories of Council membership.

With only five years remaining before the target deadline, the international community must step up its efforts to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. We therefore welcome the successful convening of the High-level Plenary Meeting on the MDGs and its sideline activities last week here in New York. While important improvements have been made globally, progress towards achieving our MDG targets is not sufficient as yet.

Progress remains uneven and varies from region to region. While national Governments have the primary responsibility to ensure progress, the international community must help by creating an environment that would enable developing countries to make greater strides on their road to development. International assistance plays an important catalytic role in the developing countries' efforts to attain their development goals.

We therefore wish to emphasize here that fulfilment by developed countries of their official development assistance commitments, increased investment flows, market access and resolution of debt problems are essential to enabling the developing countries to realize their MDG targets. It is high time that the unjust and coercive economic measures and trade embargoes that are hampering the attainment of the MDGs and the development of the developing countries, and thus hurting the people, be removed.

We are pleased to report that despite challenges, Myanmar has made certain progress towards achieving most of the eight MDGs in varying degrees, especially in areas such as poverty alleviation, food security and the promotion of education and health.

As a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, Myanmar has all along recognized the legitimate right of every State to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. However, we firmly oppose the proliferation or production of nuclear weapons and strongly support any efforts leading to realization of the vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Therefore we heartily welcomed the signing of the New START treaty by the leaders of the United States and the Russian Federation with a view to reducing their respective nuclear arsenals. It gave us hope and expectation with respect to the elimination of nuclear weapons and further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms. We also join others in calling for the early entry into force and full implementation of the New START treaty.

In our noble fight against growing transnational crime and terrorism, no single country can act alone, as it requires a global solution and concerted action by the world's nations. Myanmar unequivocally condemns all forms and manifestation of terrorism. We are working closely with the international community to strengthen our efforts and cooperation in regional and multilateral frameworks in order to prevent and combat terrorism and transnational crime, such as illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and cybercrime. We are also working together with fellow members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to step up efforts to deal with prevention, control, preparedness and response to pandemic diseases in our region.

The issue of climate change has become a pressing global challenge that threatens humankind. The environmental problem knows no national boundaries; no country can be insulated from the consequences of climate change. The unprecedented

frequency and severity of recent natural disasters, such as the earthquake in Haiti, floods in China and Pakistan and heat waves around the world, clearly testify to the consequences of global climate change.

Myanmar was also a victim of climate change in May 2008, when it was hit by the devastating Cyclone Nargis, the strongest ever in our history. After more than two years we are pleased to say that we have now passed the emergency relief stage and successfully rebuilt better in the affected areas through our massive reconstruction efforts, together with the United Nations, ASEAN and the international community. I wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the international community for all the humanitarian assistance to Myanmar in response to that natural disaster.

In addressing the pressing global issue of climate change we must redouble our efforts not only to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions but also to provide financial resources and technology to developing countries so that they might take effective mitigation and adaptation measures. Although industrialized countries are mainly responsible for climate change, the developing countries are the most severely affected by its consequences. Myanmar therefore believes that any approach to address climate change must be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

We therefore look forward to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Cancún, Mexico, later this year. We hope the negotiations in that Conference will result in fruitful outcomes that will translate into concrete action on commitments made by the developed countries to reduce substantive emissions and to assist developing countries in their mitigation and adaptation efforts.

May I take this opportunity to briefly apprise this Assembly of ongoing political developments in my country, Myanmar.

Today, Myanmar is at a critical phase of its political transformation. The multiparty-democracy general elections are set to be held on 7 November 2010, as the fifth step of our charted political road map. A total of 37 political parties, including those representing various ethnic nationalities and groups, will take part. Over 3,000 candidates will contest for a total of 1,171 seats in the Peoples' Parliament, the National Parliament and state/regional parliaments. Such a large participation has made it crystal clear that the elections have become virtually inclusive. Political parties have already started their campaign activities. The people will exercise their democratic right to elect the representatives of their choice who can best serve their interests.

Based upon its ample experience and lessons learned in holding multiparty general elections, Myanmar is confident of its ability to conduct the elections in an orderly manner. Whatever challenges may face us, we are committed to do our best to hold successful, free and fair general elections in the best interest of the country and its people.

As our new State Constitution subscribes to the present foreign policy, we believe that the new Government to emerge after the elections will continue to embrace the policy of maintaining and strengthening friendly relations with all nations and will work closely with the United Nations. Myanmar looks forward to strengthening closer engagements with the international community in the post election era.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. George Yeo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Yeo (Singapore): Although the global economic situation has improved considerably, it is still fragile. Much of the relief has come from the massive liquidity that has been pumped into the global financial system by national Governments. That bought us time to restructure our economies and correct the underlying imbalances that led to the crisis in the first place.

Whether the restructuring is happening fast enough is, however, still an open question. The economist Joseph Schumpeter viewed economic downturns as the system renewing itself, a process he described as creative destruction. In theory, that sounds good. In practice, it is difficult for political leaders to stand idly by when companies go bust and jobs are lost. Everyone likes the creative part. Destruction, however, can mean losing an election, which politicians invariably try to avoid.

The repricing of production factors such as real estate and labour is politically sensitive in any country, and Governments get blamed for it. Adjusting relative factor costs through the exchange rate is usually easier to achieve, although currency devaluation can create

other problems such as inflation. The argument over fair exchange rates in the world today reflects competing domestic pressures to ease the pain of restructuring in different countries. Thus the United States wants China to revalue the yuan renminbi, while China protests that it is being blamed for the economic weaknesses of other countries.

Of course, if the whole world were to use the same currency, the only way countries would be able to adjust would be through improved productivity and repricing. Exchange rate adjustments can facilitate structural adjustment, provided that the deeper economic problems are also tackled. With the world becoming multipolar, global macroeconomic coordination has become more complicated. Recognizing the inability of the Group of Seven or the Group of Eight to achieve such coordination, the Group of 20 (G-20) was formed two years ago when the global economy stared into an abyss after the collapse of Lehman Brothers. Without the G-20 acting in concert, the economic crisis could well have led to a global depression. The G-20 — the members of which collectively account for some 85 per cent of total global gross domestic product — is therefore a vital grouping in the community of nations.

Going forward, the G-20 has to go beyond the reform of international financial institutions and better coordination of fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies. Without fundamental restructuring of the real economy, we may experience a double dip. Without fundamental restructuring, increased liquidity in the global system will end up creating new asset bubbles, some of which we already see forming in Asia. For this restructuring to take place, the international trading system must be kept open. Only then can markets make adjustments and prices find their right levels. In fighting protectionism in all its forms, the leadership of the G-20 is critical. If, for lack of political will, the G-20 is unable to avert the crisis of a second dip, crisis will in the end force it to act, and by then it will be at much greater human cost to all of us.

For precisely that reason, we must not allow interest in the Doha Development Agenda to flag. When the Doha Round was launched in November 2001, a key consideration was development. For many of us who were in Doha during the negotiations, the Millennium Development Goals were uppermost in our minds. I remember Tanzanian trade minister Iddi Simba insisting, on behalf of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, that the word "development" be explicitly incorporated into the name of the new round.

It has been 10 years since the Millennium Development Goals were launched. While some countries have done well, many others have not. The G-20 countries must take into account, in their deliberations, the interest of all countries, not only of their own. The G-20, which together accounts for 80 per cent of international trade, has to play a leadership role in breaking the current impasse in the Doha negotiations. In particular, we must ensure that the needs of developing countries, especially the needs of the least developed countries (LDCs), are met. Freeing up agricultural trade, for example, will make a huge difference to their welfare.

With those concerns in mind, a loose grouping of countries calling itself the Global Governance Group, or 3G, was established more than a year ago. Its objectives were spelled out in a document circulated to the Members of the United Nations on 1 March. The basic stance of the Group is to support the work of the G-20 and hold it accountable to the general membership of the United Nations. Permanent Representatives within the 3G Group meet regularly in New York, including before and after G-20 meetings, to present views and make suggestions, which are circulated to everyone at the United Nations. Depending on the subjects discussed, we invite individual members of the G-20 to join us at our meetings. For example, in preparation for the coming G-20 Summit in Seoul, the 3G Group had several meetings with senior Korean officials, including their G-20 "Sherpa", to convey some of our views and concerns.

A major concern of the countries of the Group is development. In this regard, we have prepared inputs to be submitted to the G-20 working group on development. It is good that both Korea as the current Chair of the G-20 and France as the incoming Chair are pushing development on the agenda.

Let us be clear at the outset that development is not principally about aid. Whether a people is able to lift itself from the depths of poverty depends more on internal than external factors. Good governance is, of course, paramount. Investing in the inherent potential of citizens and creating a favourable environment for that potential to be realized are central to good governance. We would like to commend President

Deiss on his decision to make "Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance" the theme of this General Assembly. It is most timely.

A critical element in good governance is education. With education, individuals are able to acquire the information and knowledge they need to add value to the world. Aid that helps a people to build up its internal strength is valuable. Aid that creates dependency is harmful. With education, a citizenry is more able to insist on democratic safeguards against the abuse of power and corruption. Taking full advantage of globalization and information technology, we can now spread education into remote corners of the world.

One of the most important developments in the world today is the widespread availability of cheap mobile phones, often with built-in cameras. Mobile phones have altered traditional power relationships everywhere where they are available. No longer can individuals be kept ignorant and exploited for long, because they have alternatives. As smart phones fall in price — which they are bound to do — social networking infrastructures like Facebook, which already has half a billion users in the world, will radically change the world we live in. Without being planned for or financed by any national Government, Facebook is arguably the most important social infrastructure in the world today. It is an astonishing phenomenon. Yet, it is only one wave of many more waves to come.

Whether we like it or not, the revolution in technology — not only information technology but also in genetics, material science and other fields — will cause the creative destruction that many politicians dread. Communities and Governments that work with technological change will surge ahead, while those fighting change will be left behind. In this new age, those who are wedded to dogma and ideology become stuck in the past. Therefore, when we talk about development, the key is education.

We must make sure that basic conditions are met, that children are fed and healthy and that no group is discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity, religion or gender. The knowledge needed for development is already available in the world, and delivery systems can be readily put into place.

Unfortunately, there are many obstacles impeding the flow of knowledge. Protectionism is a major obstacle. It slows the spread of education and knowledge. Throughout history, every time a new trade route is established, knowledge flows along it, enabling the relatively backward to catch up. Our inability to move the Doha Development Agenda forward is particularly injurious to LDCs.

An important way to help communities acquire more knowledge and use information better is to foster the growth of liveable cities. To develop, countries have to urbanize, and in the coming decades large parts of the world will be urbanized on every continent. China during Mao Zedong's time was 20 per cent urban. Today, it is almost half urban. In 20 years' time it will reach the same level of urbanization as Taiwan or countries like Korea and Japan, which are over 90 per cent urban.

Urbanization as an organic process of development can be healthy or unhealthy. Cities can be energy-efficient, knowledge-intensive centres of production, education and sustainable living, or they can be hellholes festering with poor education, unemployment, inequality, crime and pollution. Because of the specific challenges that we had to overcome in our own development, Singapore has been promoting the sharing of urban developmental experiences as a practical way to help countries develop in areas such as public administration, low-cost housing, water management, transportation planning and better logistics. Developing countries that are urbanizing rapidly — and they have to do so in order to develop — should not have to repeat the mistakes of those who have gone before them.

All of us have a vested interest in the growth of liveable cities in the third world. For example, carbon emissions cannot be reduced without healthy urbanization. We hope that fostering liveable cities will become a major objective of the G-20 countries. The best form of aid we can provide is knowledge and training. Two years ago, Singapore signed an agreement with the World Bank to establish an urban hub for the dissemination of knowledge about liveable cities.

A basic requirement for healthy urban development is good water management, which has become a major challenge in various parts of the world. We should do much more to learn from one another's experiences, especially in the face of growing weather volatility. Last Friday, Slovenia convened a

Green Group meeting involving a small group of countries to discuss the subject of water management, which we hope will be given more attention in the future.

Despite the concerns about the global economy, never before have the prospects of bringing development into every continent been so promising. This is not to say that outcomes will be equalized. Human beings as individuals and in groups are competitive by nature, and we must expect that some will do better than others at any point in time. Indeed, by learning from the successes and mistakes of front-runners, human communities often leapfrog over one another, and this is a historical process. Competition, however, should be conducted in a civilized way and within an overall global framework and value system that recognizes our global humanity and destiny.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Walid Al Moualem, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Moualem (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate Mr. Joseph Deiss personally, as well as his country, Switzerland, on his election to the presidency of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. His experience and competence qualify him to ably discharge his responsibilities, and I wish him every success in his endeavours. I also thank his predecessor, Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, and extend to him and his fraternal country our appreciation for his skilful stewardship of the work of the General Assembly during the previous session. I would also like to express to the Secretary-General our appreciation and wishes for success in fulfilling the tasks entrusted to him.

The Middle East region has been rife with tensions for many decades. It has survived major events and numerous wars. The policies, interests and trends that have unfolded on its soil have converged at times but clashed at others. Due to its geographic location, the Middle East influences neighbouring countries in Asia, Europe and Africa and is, in turn, influenced by them. Syria, which lies at the heart of the Middle East, has experienced these tensions, policies, events and outcomes and has reacted to them.

This fact — which has spelled both positive and negative consequences for the Syrian Arab Republic — prompted us to define our perspective in addressing external issues, particularly the nature of our international relations. Safeguarding and sustaining Syrian and Arab interests is our priority. Therefore, our door remains open for an in depth and meaningful dialogue aimed at reconciling differences with others and reaching common ground on the basis of which progress can be made. That was our response when Syria endured attempts to isolate and blockade it, a response we reaffirm today as Syria discharges its role as a major player in matters related to the security and stability of the region. We believe that civilized international relations must be built on openness and dialogue as opposed to insularity, isolation, confrontation and aggression. This is our approach, which we hope will prevail in a world driven by multiple interests and perspectives, overwhelmed by problems and complications, yet at the same time sustained by hopes and noble visions.

The world has declared that it is determined to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, and has stressed that peace is an urgent prerequisite for the maintenance of security and stability in the region. In Israel, there is much talk about peace, yet the drums of war continue to sound. Land appropriation for settlement-building goes on unabated. Peace negotiations, we are told, are currently under way on the basis of the two-State solution, but settlement activities are about to make this two-State solution a dead letter that stands no chance of survival. Israel is intensely pursuing its Judaization plans for Jerusalem in order to depopulate it of its Palestinian inhabitants. Israeli actions threaten the safety of Jerusalem's holy sites. Through settlement activities, actions and declarations concerning Jerusalem, Israel pursues a fait accompli policy on the basis of which it imposes its will regardless of whether negotiations continue or stall.

Peace can be genuine only if there is a genuine will to make peace. That is the litmus test. Political manoeuvres during negotiations under the umbrella of the desire for peace strain and exacerbate the situation and may make it more volatile and explosive.

Syria seeks a just and comprehensive peace achieved through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the Arab Peace Initiative. Our position has been known and declared for years. We have the will to make peace and we are the masters of our decision, which is unwavering. The occupied Syrian Golan is not negotiable nor is it a bargaining chip. Recognition of

the fact that it must be returned fully is the basis on which peacemaking arrangements should be made. Syria is ready to resume peace negotiations from the point where they stopped, through the Turkish mediator, if it finds in Israel a partner committed to the terms of reference of peacemaking, and if that partner has the political will to achieve peace.

We note with satisfaction the objective opinion of the report of the Human Rights Council fact-finding mission investigating the Israeli attack on the freedom flotilla that was headed to Gaza on an exclusively humanitarian mission (A/HRC/15/21). We look forward to the conclusions to be drawn from the report of the international commission now that the necessary legal grounds and supporting evidence have been established by the Human Rights Council's fact-finding mission.

Syria is a fraternal Arab neighbour of Iraq. For us, Iraq thus remains a subject of interest and a cause for concern, particularly when the situation there deteriorates. We embrace any improvement in conditions there with a major sense of relief. The restoration of Iraq's full sovereignty and independence, the preservation of its Arab and Islamic identity, the unity of its people and its territorial integrity are of utmost priority for our approach towards Iraq and its future. Undoubtedly, national unity remains the cornerstone of a secure, prosperous and strong Iraq.

We have called for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Iraq. In this context, the partial withdrawal of the American forces from Iraq constitutes, in our view, a positive first step in the direction of Iraq's assumption of its power over its own affairs and the restoration of its full sovereignty over its territories. We hope that Iraq will ultimately develop strong military and security capabilities to safeguard its internal security and safety as an independent and sovereign State.

It should be reiterated that Iraqi security is contingent upon its national unity and is based on its Arab-Islamic identity and the principle of the participation of all segments of Iraqi society in building their country's present and future. Syria is willing to cooperate with Iraq in every aspect to serve Iraq's interests and the common interests of our two fraternal countries.

My country has been advocating the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East since 2003, a demand we included in a draft resolution we presented to the Security Council at the time. We continue to stress that Israel must be made to comply with international decisions calling on it to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to submit its nuclear installations to the comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime. Israel's accession to the Treaty is of extreme significance for the security and stability of our region.

We often wonder why some States talk about the universality of the NPT but hasten to make strenuous efforts to shelter Israel from the Agency's oversight. They are encouraging Israel to continue to develop its nuclear military programme, which is a cause of concern to the people of the region. Furthermore, this policy of double standards runs counter to the non-proliferation prerequisites, not only in the Middle East region, but also in the world at large.

We reaffirm that all States have the right to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful uses, as guaranteed by the NPT. We also call for the peaceful resolution of all disputes relevant to this aspect through dialogue.

Syria follows the developments in the Sudan because we are dedicated to the Sudan's unity, sovereignty, security and stability. In that context, we are grateful to the State of Qatar, the League of Arab States and the African Union for their efforts. We also appreciate and support the African Union's efforts in settling disputes in the Sudan and other conflict zones on the African continent, and in promoting Africa's role within the international system.

We also strongly reiterate our call to lift the embargo that has been imposed on Cuba for decades.

The world has suffered numerous natural disasters this year resulting from climate change and global warming. We all know that these disasters are but a prelude to more severe and wider-scale calamities that could well threaten natural life on this planet. We have an obligation towards nature, yet we have exceeded all limits in abusing it.

Many countries have chosen to ignore the warnings of scientists and the ominous signals from nature. We must rise to this serious challenge and assume our historic responsibility, so as to make up for past imbalances and shortcomings.

We look forward to an expression of international solidarity in Cancún, Mexico, based on scientific evidence and on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. It is our hope that the Cancún outcome will take into account the priorities of sustainable development in order to arrive at a comprehensive and legally binding post-2012 framework agreement. We believe that it is extremely important to address the shortcomings of Copenhagen and to renew the commitment to the Bali Action Plan and the premises of the Kyoto Protocol.

The painful situation in Pakistan, a typical symptom of climate change, is yet another example of the devastating disasters that we must expect unless we work seriously and collectively to address this grave situation. The people and Government of my country, Syria, wholeheartedly sympathize with Pakistan and other disaster-stricken countries. I stress the urgent need for States to increase assistance to Pakistan, both in cash and in kind, to mitigate the tragic and widespread damage there and prevent any further exacerbation of the situation.

We aspire to a better, more just and secure world and look forward to strengthening and revitalizing the role of the United Nations and guaranteeing respect for international law. We must not forget, though, that our planet Earth is home to the world we are aspiring to build. This home is besieged by an ominous phenomenon, climate change, which entails tragic consequences for humanity. This year was only a prelude to what is yet to come. We sincerely hope that the Cancún conference will be the herald of a direly needed rescue effort.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Mumuni, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Ghana.

Mr. Mumuni (Ghana): Let me begin by congratulating the President of the Assembly on his election to lead the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. I trust that he will, with his outstanding experience and excellent diplomatic skills, steer this Assembly to a successful conclusion. I also wish to thank his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, for the efficient and able manner with which he presided over the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.

Ghana subscribes to the declaration by the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government that designated 2010 as a year of peace and security. Ghana will, therefore, continue to engage other member States in the search for peace and security in places on the African continent that have known no peace, and we will contribute to renewed global efforts to prevent conflicts through preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

As we witness a decline in the number of the violent conflicts that afflicted many countries over the past decade or more, it is time to renew our commitment to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in order to ensure that countries emerging from conflict do not relapse into violence. Ghana was privileged to have served on the organizational committee of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and will remain actively involved in the pursuit of the attainment of the strategic objectives set for the post-conflict countries on the agenda of the Commission's country-specific configuration. In this regard, Ghana supports the steps being taken to also place Liberia on the agenda of the Commission.

As agreed by world leaders in 2005, Ghana strongly supports the principle of the responsibility to protect as the normative framework to prevent and deter the occurrence of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, which have occurred in many countries that were emerging from conflict. While the fear of its abuse does not take away the intrinsic value of the principle of the responsibility to protect, caution must be exercised in order to avoid its abuse. The principle is not intended to undermine the sovereignty of States; on the contrary, it is to ensure that sovereign responsibility is exercised in a manner that will prevent a repetition of the mass atrocities that were experienced in places like Rwanda, Srebrenica, Cambodia and Sierra Leone, with devastating impacts on neighbouring countries.

Sadly, in many places, some of those conflicts persist in varying degrees of intensity. The international community must be ready and willing to assist national authorities who request such assistance with a view to developing or enhancing the capacity of countries that are manifestly unable or unwilling to uphold this responsibility to do so. To that end, we welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a joint office to coordinate United Nations system-wide efforts to strengthen early warning mechanisms aimed at ensuring timely and decisive preventive action and/or intervention in appropriate cases, in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

While the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger is a major development challenge for Africa, most countries in the region are also grappling with the problems of climate change, a high disease burden, poor infrastructure, brain drain and the lack of development of productive capacity. In the last few years, African countries have had to deal with the effects of rising food and energy prices and the complications arising from the global financial and economic crisis. Those multiple crises have not only reversed impressive recent progress in economic performance, but are also jeopardizing efforts by African countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

It is gratifying to see that the interests of the international community in climate change have increased markedly in recent times, especially after the adoption of the Bali Action Plan in 2007. We need to sustain that interest and build on the common ground that was first found in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, with the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and was subsequently built on in Berlin, Kyoto, Marrakech, Bali, Copenhagen and, soon, Cancún.

There are issues that need to be addressed for progress in Cancún and beyond. What is missing is a demonstrable political will. Without that, countries will not see the need to raise their ambitions to cut emissions. Industrialized countries have made pledges to cut emissions by 2020. However commendable those commitments may be, they fall short of the 25 to 40 per cent cut that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says will give the world a chance of staying below the recommended two-degree average global temperature rise.

We need to preserve the Kyoto Protocol, which is currently the only existing international agreement with legal status to verify emission reductions. That is why it is critical for all parties to work together to address the divisions over a second commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol and ensure its continuity after 2012.

Just as there was "aid fatigue", developing countries may soon be experiencing "promise fatigue". We must get the numerous pledges out of the fine print and make them work for humanity. I am simply appealing to industrialized nations to fulfil their funding pledges, including the $30 billion in fast-track financing for developing country adaptation and mitigation efforts through 2012, and the pledge to raise $100 billion a year by 2020. For developing countries, the early delivery and transparent allocation of that money will boost our confidence in the dialogue and show that industrialized countries are truly committed to progress in the broader negotiations.

We have made progress in the implementation of the MDG agenda. However, keeping the solemn promise we made in 2000 and achieving the Goals by 2015 will require intensified efforts, much more resources and effective cooperation. No one should be oblivious to the enormous challenges African and other developing countries face in their efforts to achieve the MDGs.

Ghana will not compromise under any guise in its pursuit of good governance and the promotion of the rule of law, as these are important prerequisites for achieving sustainable social and economic development. African countries themselves have come to acknowledge that part of the reason for their impoverishment could be ascribed to poor post-independence governance practices. That is why most African countries have taken steps to consolidate their governance institutions, including strengthening the electoral system.

Food security is a national priority for Ghana. For most Ghanaians, getting enough good-quality food at affordable prices is a major concern. The Government is therefore implementing a progressive agricultural policy that will ensure increased production, especially in staples and other food crops that our climate and land can efficiently support.

Ghana will soon become an important producer of oil and gas. The focus of the Government is to ensure that Ghanaians will derive the maximum benefit from oil production. Although oil revenues will start to flow around the fourth quarter of the year, the Government is taking measures to ensure accountability and transparency in the management of revenue from oil production. To that end, an oil and gas revenue management bill has been submitted to Parliament for approval. In addition, the Government is holding a series of consultations with several countries and private operators who have expertise and experience in the field so that their knowledge can be tapped and best practices adopted.

In our efforts to create wealth and prosperity for our citizens, Ghana has made attracting foreign investment an important pillar in its development strategies. We will continue to pursue such policies in the belief that our efforts will be supported and rewarded with genuine partnership.

Africa is tired of the misery and poverty arising from resource-induced violent conflicts. Africa wants to use its oil and natural resources to create wealth for its citizens. We call on the United Nations and well-meaning development partners, including the international business community, to support our efforts to nip the so-called resource curse in the bud and exploit our God-given natural endowments for development.

Whereas the international environment for growth in Africa is still favourable, the risks posed by global imbalances and external shocks, such as the recent financial crisis, call for increased international policy coordination. We need a renewed spirit of solidarity and commitment for a comprehensive global response if we are to confront the challenges of our time.

It is in that light that Ghana wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the ideals of the United Nations and continue to live up to its Charter obligations, including playing an active role in international peacekeeping, in order to assist the Organization in its task of maintaining global peace and security and promoting fruitful and beneficial cooperation among Member States. We must resolve to muster the political will to strengthen the United Nations so that it can function effectively and redeem the majority of our peoples from wars, diseases and poverty by providing the financial and material resources required to discharge those onerous responsibilities.

It is only when we measure up to those responsibilities that we can give meaning to the phrase "We the peoples of the United Nations".

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Qureshi (Pakistan): I wish to congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session on his election. As one of the Vice-Presidents at this session, we assure him of our full support and cooperation. I also take this opportunity to convey profound gratitude and appreciation to my brother, Ali Treki, the outgoing President, for his able leadership during the sixty-fourth session. Pakistan owes him gratitude for his timely initiative to convene a plenary meeting of the Assembly on the humanitarian emergency arising from the floods in Pakistan (see A/64/PV.110).

I come to the Assembly at a difficult time in Pakistan's history. The recent flash floods — the worst in living memory — have left behind a trail of death and destruction. Precious lives have been lost, millions of acres of crops have been washed away, homes have been destroyed and livelihoods have been lost. We are grateful to the United Nations, our development partners and other friends in the international community for standing up with us in this difficult hour and for their important contribution in supporting rescue and relief operations in Pakistan.

The Government remains focused in its resolve to address the challenges posed by that humanitarian crisis. We are determined to rebuild a better and vibrant Pakistan and to do so in a transparent and accountable manner. The resilience of our people should enable us to achieve that.

We live in an ever more interconnected and interdependent world, a world where our fate and destinies are interwoven like never before, a world where it is increasingly difficult to maintain islands of peace and prosperity while conflicts, oppression and adversity fester. We live in a world where dividends of peace are shared as easily as the fallout of adversity or instability.

Today, we face an integrated onslaught of a series of new and emerging challenges that seriously threaten economic growth and development, social cohesion and environmental protection in our countries. We clearly have reached a decisive moment. We will have to make wise and well-considered choices that bring peace and prosperity to our world at present while protecting and preserving it for future generations.

The response is simple: global problems require global solutions. The world needs a new multilateral approach that truly subscribes to the values and principles that we, the peoples of the United Nations, signed on to 65 years ago.

The United Nations Charter envisages a world where equity is valued as much as entitlement, where inclusiveness replaces exclusiveness, where dialogue and collaboration define engagement, where transparency and openness guide business and decision-making in global institutions. Full and unconditional adherence to those values and principles is what will put us on the road to durable peace and security and sustained economic growth. As the primus inter pares, the United Nations is the only and truly universal multilateral Organization that enjoys the credibility, legitimacy and universal acceptability to realize that — which is also its raison d'être.

Pakistan supports comprehensive reform of the Security Council to make it more representative, equitable, transparent and accountable. Council reform must be guided by the principles of equality and democracy, which could conform to a dynamic future, one not entrenched in the historical mistakes and individual privileges of the past. We should look for an outcome that unites and does not divide the membership, one that strengthens and does not weaken the Organization. Our collective search should culminate in a consensus solution that corresponds to the interest of the entire membership, particularly small and medium States, developing countries and Africa.

Pakistan, as a leading troop-contributing country for United Nations peacekeeping, is playing its due role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Our peacekeepers have laid down their lives in missions that were operationally demanding and geographically difficult. The unique status of the United Nations brings acceptance to its peacekeeping activities, and the success of peacekeeping operations, in turn, brings credibility to the world body. For those suffering in a conflict zone, the sight of a blue helmet provides a beacon of hope, which has illuminated the lives of millions by bringing peace and alleviating their pains and sorrows.

Our commitment to the promotion of peace, security and stability, the development of friendly relations with other nations, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and the promotion of economic and social development is unwavering. It is that firm conviction that has enabled our democratic Government to remain steadfast in its resolve to fight terrorism and extremism, even as we have to deal with the massive destruction caused by catastrophic floods. Our national consensus and resolve to fight extremism and terrorism remains unshaken.

The world recognizes and applauds the important successes achieved by our security forces against terrorists. Those successes have come at a heavy cost. More than 20,000 innocent civilians have fallen victim to terrorism, and more than 2,500 personnel of the security forces have offered the ultimate sacrifice. Our material losses are nearly $50 billion. The Pakistani nation will persist in its efforts to eliminate terrorism.

The issue has both regional and global dimensions. It is imperative that all countries do more to combat that menace. It is also essential to address the root causes of terrorism, which are often found in poverty, deprivation, injustices and oppression. Terrorists recognize no borders; they have no religion and no creed. It is therefore absurd to malign a whole people or a region or any religion on that account. We cannot accept the stereotyping of Muslims as terrorists. Islam is a religion of peace, compassion and brotherhood. Terrorism is a complete antithesis to Islam's humanistic outlook and noble values.

Pakistan supports the just cause of the Palestinian people for restitution of their inalienable national rights, including their independent Palestinian State with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital.

The brazen use of force against the humanitarian freedom flotilla on 31 May 2010, which resulted in the killing of humanitarian workers, was a flagrant violation of international law and norms. We look forward to a prompt, impartial and transparent inquiry of the incident by the Secretary-General's Panel of Inquiry.

The dispute over Jammu and Kashmir is one of the oldest on the agenda of the United Nations. It is about the exercise of the right to self-determination by the Kashmiri people through a free, fair and impartial plebiscite under United Nations auspices.

Pakistan views the prevailing situation in Indian-occupied Kashmir with grave concern. Over the past two months, more than 100 Kashmiris have been killed by Indian security forces in Kashmir. We strongly condemn that brutality. The human rights of the Kashmiri people must be respected and their voices heard to create an enabling environment for a peaceful solution to the long-standing Jammu and Kashmir dispute. Pakistan reaffirms its complete solidarity with

the Kashmiri people and urges the international community to persuade India to end its repression in Kashmir.

Pakistan is willing to engage India in a comprehensive dialogue to normalize relations between the two countries by finding amicable solutions to all outstanding issues, including the core dispute of Jammu and Kashmir. A peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute, in accordance with United Nations resolutions and taking into account the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, would create an atmosphere conducive to durable peace and stability in the South Asian region.

In the spirit of global solidarity and good-neighbourly relations, Pakistan has hosted the largest concentration of refugees anywhere in the world for the past 30 years. We continue to host our Afghan brothers as a moral and humanitarian duty. No country has suffered more than Pakistan from the direct and indirect consequences of decades of conflict in Afghanistan. We thus have an abiding stake in peace and stability in Afghanistan. Our commitment to that objective remains firm. The time has come to transform Afghanistan from the centre stage of proxy wars, interference and confrontation into a hub for international cooperation and development.

Pakistan believes that the restoration of societal equilibrium in Afghanistan is an Afghan responsibility and cannot be imposed externally. We support all efforts for national reconciliation that are Afghan-owned and Afghan-led. We congratulate the Government of Afghanistan on holding successful parliamentary elections. They will strengthen President Karzai's initiation of national reconciliation and reintegration.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are important pillars of the international peace and security architecture. We remain committed to both objectives and believe that they should be pursued in an equitable and non discriminatory manner. The asymmetric build-up of conventional weapons and the espousal of aggressive doctrines have a negative impact on regional security.

The pursuit of discriminatory policies and disregard for the security interests of States seriously erode globally the moral authority that must underlie equitable approaches to promoting the goals of nuclear disarmament and non proliferation. We have consistently pursued a policy of conventional and nuclear restraint, along with conflict resolution in South Asia. We reaffirm our proposal for a strategic restraint regime as an important way to promote the cause of peace, stability and security in our region.

Pakistan, with the fifth largest population in the world and only 0.4 per cent of the world's total greenhouse-gas emissions, is one hundred and thirty-fifth on the global list of greenhouse-gas emitters. Despite such a low contribution, climate change is causing irrevocable damage to Pakistan, with tremendous social, environmental and economic impacts. While the world continues to discuss climate change and its scientific basis and to seek a fair and equitable outcome of the ongoing negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), climate change has already become a reality for 170 million Pakistanis.

The present situation in Pakistan reconfirms our extreme vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change. It also complicates the post-flood reconstruction and rehabilitation scenario in Pakistan. It is in Pakistan's interests to work vigorously and creatively for an early and successful conclusion to the ongoing climate-change negotiations under UNFCCC auspices. Any lasting solution will have to respect the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the respective capabilities of countries.

With an active and empowered Parliament, a vigilant and well-informed civil society, free media and an independent judiciary, Pakistan's democratic Government is putting in place mechanisms to ensure good and accountable governance at all levels in the country. The democratic Government, inspired by the vision of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, attaches special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of all segments of society, particularly women, children and minorities. In May, Pakistan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Pakistan is now a State party to all 27 human rights conventions.

We welcome the creation of the new composite gender entity, UN Women. We hope it will lead the efforts to promote rights, empowerment and equality for women throughout the world.

Pursuing peace and forging close regional economic partnerships is an important pillar of our strategy to pursue economic growth and development in Pakistan. We are working through both the Economic Cooperation Organization and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation to further deepen regional collaboration and expand people-to-people contacts, including through inter-parliamentary cooperation.

Our strategy and actions at the national level stem from a firm belief that the primary responsibility and central action in our pursuit for economic growth and development is vested in our nation. Despite a challenging economic and security environment, we are pursuing an aggressive reform programme. That agenda focuses on pro poor growth, boosting rural economy and agriculture, affirmative action for women and minorities and expansion of social safety nets. We are conscious that that requires enhanced fiscal space, for which we have introduced economic and tax reforms in close collaboration with international development partners.

The President returned to the Chair.

We have to work together to make this world a safe and secure place for our children. We have to make strenuous endeavours to achieve the ideals of the United Nations Charter. We have to make this world a prosperous place free from hunger, want and poverty. We owe all this to our future generations. We cannot afford to fail in this endeavour.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Dimitris Droutsas, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic.

Mr. Droutsas (Greece): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki of Libya, for his tireless efforts in taking forward the Assembly's work and to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President at the sixty-fifth session.

I would also like at this point to fully align my country's positions with those expressed in the statement of the European Union (EU). It is my firm belief that the General Assembly would greatly benefit from arrangements that would allow EU representatives to fulfil their responsibilities in an effective manner at formal meetings.

We can all agree that the United Nations is the only global entity that commands universal legitimacy and is the Organization to which we should all look, and actively support, in order to provide collective and therefore optimal solutions to the ever-growing array of multifaceted issues confronting us. It is a fact that meeting the needs of our peoples increasingly transcends the abilities of individual nation-States. That is where the role of the United Nations comes to the fore, and it is why our discussions on reforming and revitalizing the Organization are of paramount importance.

Climate change is the world's greatest environmental challenge. We all know that it will increasingly affect all aspects of our lives, including peace and security. We now need to focus all efforts in order to secure a successful outcome of the upcoming summit in Cancún.

The Greek Government is proposing a new Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative, in close collaboration with Mediterranean countries that are strongly committed to climate and energy security. A formal launch of the Initiative is planned on 22 October in Athens, ahead of the Cancún summit. In the same vein, the central theme of our Chairmanship-in-Office of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation is "the Black Sea turns green".

The recent global economic and financial crisis has left few countries unaffected. Greece was no exception, despite the tough and radical reform agenda we are implementing that is setting the country steadily back on its feet. Efforts for a more efficient and concrete global financial regulatory framework are necessary. In that regard, I welcome the results of the High-level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, and I commend the Secretary-General for his timely initiative.

Greece continues to support all efforts for an effective and efficient Human Rights Council with enhanced status, mandate, structures and membership. Greece will actively defend the relevance of the Human Rights Council through its candidacy for the years 2012 to 2015.

Promoting effective interaction and coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations must be one of our key priorities. We consider the upcoming 2010 summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) a major

milestone in the European security dialogue — the well-known Corfu Process, launched by the Greek OSCE Chairmanship in 2009.

Greece has made a commitment especially to our region and its people. A key factor for bringing stability and development to our region is good-neighbourliness, a fundamental principle that together with the other principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations constitutes the cornerstone of contemporary international legal order.

The Balkans —our immediate neighbourhood — is still a sensitive area in terms of stability. The dust from the dissolution of Yugoslavia has not yet settled. Greece's vision for the Balkans is of a region in which democracy finally becomes the norm, where citizens' aspirations can finally be realized through peaceful and democratic practices, where the rights of minorities are respected, and where Governments are accountable, economies are transparent and politics allow for the fullest participation of all elements of society.

In order to breathe new life into the prospect of the Balkans' integration into the European Union, Greece has put forward a new initiative known as Agenda 2014. There are still open wounds in our region — Kosovo being the most pressing — and we must ensure that this time the European Union will be present with a strong voice. The European prospect for our entire region can boost the political process that is about to begin on Kosovo. At the same time, we need to keep an open and clear path for Serbia to begin accession negotiations with the European Union.

Another open issue in the Balkans revolves around the name of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. That is not a bilateral, pedantic dispute about historic symbols, as some may try to portray it, but a regional question with deep historical roots related to good-neighbourliness. A compromise on the name issue is needed. Greece has already done its part. A fair and lasting solution can be based only on a name with a geographic qualifier to be used for all purposes, erga omnes. Let me explain why.

Macedonia is a large geographic region, most of which lies in Greece. A small part is in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and a smaller part in Bulgaria. The part cannot represent the whole, and the exclusive claims of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the name "Macedonia" cannot be allowed to fuel nationalism. Any solution must be universally implemented, because otherwise today's situation will simply be perpetuated. We have intensified our efforts to reach a settlement in the context of the established United Nations negotiating process, led by Mr. Nimetz.

I chose the General Assembly, which is the natural forum for solving international disputes, to declare once again Greece's readiness to reach a solution, even tomorrow, and to call upon Prime Minister Gruevski to display leadership and become our partner for progress, progress that will result in a bright and prosperous future for our neighbours in the European Union — a future we wish to see become a reality soon. Greece is extending a hand of friendship and cooperation. The time has come for our neighbours to take that hand.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is again at a turning point. The resumption of direct talks was a significant achievement, but only the beginning. Now our number one priority is to sustain that dialogue and for it to bear fruit. Both sides have an obligation to show respect for that fragile diplomatic process. Actions that threaten its very existence, like Israeli settlement construction, must be avoided in order to prevent the negotiations from becoming one more exercise in futility.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General and all those who labour with him for a just solution in Cyprus, a solution based on United Nations resolutions for a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with one international personality, one citizenship and one sovereignty, a solution in full conformity with the acquis communautaire.

Cyprus is a tragic example of where our shared sense of justice — our shared code of values — has gone astray. Cyprus is the victim of military invasion and remains occupied by foreign troops. That is the truth; that is reality, and it must end. We need to move beyond that situation. It will take courage from everyone involved. It is a matter of political will, resolution and determination, such as that displayed by President Christofias.

I extend my appeal to the Turkish Cypriots. We want you near us, in our wider European family. The participation of a reunited Cyprus in the European Union means that every Cypriot enjoys safety, equality under the law, protection of their human rights, appropriate representation and security under a European roof. Let me be clear: in the modern

European environment, relics of the past, such as guarantor Powers, seem and sound anachronistic and completely out of touch.

Turkey can prove its commitment to a lasting solution to the Cyprus issue by withdrawing its occupation forces from the island, thus boosting both the negotiation process and its own European perspective.

Greek-Turkish relations are an important parameter for the stability of the region. Burdened by a heavy historical past as we are, it is not an easy task to change course and turn a long-standing rivalry into good-neighbourliness, free from the threat of the use of force or unfounded territorial claims. Respect for international law is the sole basis for a healthy and peaceful relationship between our two countries.

We have opened a dialogue, one that is honest, and although we may and do differ on many issues, such as how we see Cyprus and how we approach our bilateral relations, this open approach can only lead to a progressive resolution of our problems. The Turkish leadership and the people of Turkey know we are honest in what we say and in our desire for a new and peaceful relationship. I strongly believe our mutual interests can outweigh our political differences. We can and must resolve these differences through peaceful means, and a possible way to go is through the International Court of Justice.

I do not want to give the false impression that all our problems have suddenly been resolved. It is most distressing that a variety of statements and acts still undermine this very genuine and difficult effort. The long-standing threat of war, the casus belli against my country, is unacceptable and has no place in our European and global family of values and principles.

There are those who certainly may wish that our efforts fail, but it is our historical duty to overcome those difficulties and maintain the momentum in response to our peoples' mandate and their desire for peace.

We look forward to the day when Belgrade and Pristina will be an easy bus ride away, when Jerusalem and Damascus, Athens and Ankara and, of course, the two parts of divided Nicosia will no longer be separated by fear and suspicion, but will be joined in peace. Those were the words used and the vision expressed by George Papandreou, today's Prime Minister of Greece, in his very first address to the General Assembly as Greek Foreign Minister in 1999 (see *A/54/PV.9*). Allow me repeat those words and vision in my first address to this body in the same capacity. This is a wish and vision that, I think, we all share.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Arvin Boolell, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr. Boolell (Mauritius): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, and I thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Ali Treki, for his excellent stewardship of the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. I seize this opportunity to convey to you the warm greetings of the Honourable Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of Mauritius.

We are meeting this year against the backdrop of the triple blow of food, fuel and financial crises, which have significantly slowed the social and economic progress of many, particularly developing, countries. Although we are now witnessing signs of gradual recovery, we are nonetheless aware of the fact that the world is still mired in the consequences of the recession.

These crises have exposed the deficiencies of the international financial and governance structure and made us realize that the pre crisis status quo has to be challenged, if we are to ensure a better future for our people. While we acknowledge the pre eminent role that the Group of 20 is playing in addressing the financial and economic crisis, the widening and acceleration of global integration and interconnectedness dictate the necessity of democratizing the international economic and financial decision-making processes in order to ensure that the future development of our global economy is balanced and equitable.

It was therefore reassuring to hear the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, Mr. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, stating last Monday,

> "To regain momentum, we need a sense of shared responsibility among the various actors — the developing countries *themselves, the advanced*

economies and, in part, the international financial institutions." (*A/65/PV.3*)

The statistics are eloquent regarding the negative impact of the multitude of crises on the progress achieved on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As global economic output has declined, the ranks of the poor have swelled with the newly poor.

A week ago, from this very rostrum, an impressive number of world leaders reaffirmed their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals. In our drive to enable the less fortunate to lead a dignified life, it is imperative that we have closer cooperation and collaboration between Government, civil society and the private sector, supplemented by innovative thinking, cutting-edge knowledge and path-breaking initiatives.

Success in achieving the Millennium Development Goals is inextricably linked to the broader agenda of climate change. The effects of climate change and global warming threaten the very implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. While climate change is affecting all countries, it is abundantly clear that the small islands and low-lying and coastal States are the most affected by its consequences.

We therefore urge that the small island developing States be given simplified access to financing from the $30 billion of fast-start funding pledged in the Copenhagen Accord and similar access to the longer-term funds proposed for the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund. That adaptation funding should be in the form of grants and not loans.

We hope that the forthcoming Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Cancún later this year, will build on the 2009 Copenhagen Accord to ultimately arrive at a legally binding agreement on limits to greenhouse gas emissions based on the principle of common but differentiated capabilities and responsibilities and the establishment of mitigation and adaptation funds. Let us therefore join our efforts and not miss the opportunity, because a world that is climate-smart is within reach, if we act now, act together and act differently.

In its effort to contribute towards the global momentum to attain a low-carbon future, Mauritius is implementing the Maurice Ile Durable project, which aims at protecting the environment and minimizing dependence on fossil fuels through increased utilization of renewable energy and a more efficient use of energy in general.

The High-level Review Meeting on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States re emphasized the fact that, owing to their inherent specificity, small island developing States should be recognized as a distinct category of countries and should be granted special treatment, particularly in accessing official development assistance and concessionary funding. The present gross domestic product criterion applied in graduating least developed countries to middle-income status is most unfair to small island developing States, since it does not take into account the unique vulnerabilities of those States.

The time has come for a shift in how we think of development. We need to articulate strongly a new development paradigm, one where developing countries are part and parcel of the solution to create a more vibrant world economy in this truly multipolar world.

We therefore look forward to the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round at the earliest possible date. It is also crucial to close the gaps in the provision of Aid for Trade so as to support the building of supply capacity, which lies at the core of development.

At the subregional level, Mauritius, in its capacity as the new chair of the Indian Ocean Commission, will continue to lay greater emphasis on the creation of an economic and commercial space, the implementation of a regional strategy on fisheries and aquaculture, the promotion of tourism in our region in traditional and emerging markets, and the development of a comprehensive regional anti-piracy programme.

A fundamental precondition for socio economic development can be found in a process of social inclusiveness, with human rights at its core. As a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Mauritius is firmly committed to the safeguarding and protection of human rights, at both the national and the international levels. In this regard, we unreservedly *condemn* the serious human rights violations committed by warring factions in conflict zones, where

vulnerable members of the society, particularly women and children, are being targeted. At the national level, a truth and reconciliation commission has started the challenging task of compiling a report on slavery and indentured labour in Mauritius during the colonial period.

Mauritius continues to be preoccupied with the fate of pro democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, whose heroic and unbreakable determination and steadfastness to free her people from years of subjugation compel all of us who are strong advocates of democratic values to stand and speak up. Depriving Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi of the right to stand as a candidate in the forthcoming general elections scheduled in November this year is considered by my delegation as the deprivation of the basic rights of the people of Myanmar to freely choose the leaders to whom they wish to entrust the destiny of their country.

Democracy and the rule of law are essential elements for the development, stability, security and prosperity of any country. The world has made significant strides in this respect. Nonetheless, it is regrettable that conflicts in certain parts of the world continue to undermine progress. The imperatives of a globalizing world require the international community to remain seized of these issues and not to shirk its responsibilities.

In the Indian Ocean region, Mauritius is particularly concerned with the current political impasse prevailing in our neighbouring sisterly country — Madagascar. We are actively engaged in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU) and the Indian Ocean Commission, working to assist Madagascar to find a peaceful solution to the political crisis.

In this regard, we wish to state that we are supportive of the initiative led by the *Coordination National des Organisations de la Société Civile* to organize an inter Malagasy dialogue in order to find a solution designed by all Malagasies to the crisis in Madagascar. And we sincerely hope that the dialogue will be credible, transparent and include all sections of Malagasy society in the search for durable peace in the interest of both the country and the region. Mauritius has offered its assistance in setting up an SADC liaison office in Madagascar in order to provide support in moving the Malagasy-Malagasy dialogue.

Two decades of civil unrest have inflicted untold miseries and difficulties on the Somali people and rendered governance of the country almost impossible. We commend the Intergovernmental Authority on Development for its efforts to promote peace and security in Somalia through the Transitional Federal Government. We believe that the people of Somalia deserve greater commitment from the international community towards restoring law and order inside the country and also towards putting an end to the piracy problem off the coast of Somalia.

In order to promote a more proactive engagement of the countries of the region in the fight against piracy, Mauritius will host the Second Regional Ministerial Conference on Piracy on 6 and 7 October, in collaboration with the European Union, the Indian Ocean Commission and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. Mauritius is also envisaging the possibility of trying piracy suspects caught in the Indian Ocean in its courts, if the logistical, infrastructural and financial support of the international community is adequate.

The current process for talks between Israelis and Palestinians has given renewed hope for lasting peace through the creation of an independent sovereign Palestinian State existing side by side with the State of Israel within secured and recognized borders. Mauritius has always supported the legitimate and inalienable right of the Palestinian people to live in peace and security in an independent Palestinian State. We therefore commend President Barack Obama for his initiatives and leadership in enabling the direct talks between President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Global governance in the maintenance of international peace and security will remain incomplete until we achieve a comprehensive reform of the United Nations Security Council — a reformed Security Council that meets and responds to the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century. In this respect, Mauritius fully supports the Common African Position, as enshrined in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. We reiterate our support for India, the largest democracy, obtaining a permanent seat in a reformed Security Council. We also support the rightful aspiration of Latin America and the Caribbean for a permanent seat in the Council.

We have in no uncertain terms drawn the attention of this body every year to the fact that Mauritius has sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia. The Chagos Archipelago was illegally excised by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius prior to our independence. This dismemberment was done in blatant violation of General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965. We have raised the issue of the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Archipelago with successive British Governments and initially pursued the matter as a friendly dispute. In view of the lack of progress, we suggested that the issue be addressed in bilateral talks. Although the process of bilateral talks was initiated in January 2009, the issue of our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago has yet to be addressed.

We are deeply concerned that the British Government decided on 1 April 2010 to unilaterally declare a marine protected area around the Chagos Archipelago — our territory — allegedly to protect the marine environment. The unilateral establishment of this marine protected area infringes the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Archipelago and constitutes a serious impediment to the eventual resettlement there of its former inhabitants and other Mauritians, as any economic activity in the protected zone would be precluded. The Government of Mauritius has decided not to recognize the existence of the so called marine protected area.

The illegal excision of the Chagos Archipelago from the territory of Mauritius has indeed a tragic human dimension. All the inhabitants of the Archipelago were at that time forced by the British authorities to abruptly leave their homes there, in total disregard for their human rights. Most of them were moved to the main island of Mauritius. The Government of Mauritius is sensitive to and fully supportive of the plight of the displaced inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago and to their desire to resettle in their birthplace there.

Mauritius greatly appreciates the unflinching and unanimous support it has consistently received from the African Union and the Non-Aligned Movement for the assertion of its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. The last AU Summit held in Kampala last July and the last Non-Aligned Movement Summit held in July 2008 in Sharm el-Sheikh both reaffirmed that the Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, forms an integral part of the territory of the Republic of Mauritius. They also called upon the United Kingdom to expeditiously put an end to its unlawful occupation of the Chagos Archipelago with a view to enabling Mauritius to effectively exercise its sovereignty over it.

We urge the United Kingdom once again to take the necessary steps for the unconditional return of the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, to Mauritius without further delay. In our annual statement, we also reaffirmed the sovereignty of Mauritius over Tromelin Island. The Governments of Mauritius and France reached an agreement earlier this year on the co management of the island and its maritime zones without prejudice to the sovereignty of Mauritius over Tromelin. This is considered to be a first and positive step towards the resolution of the sovereignty issue.

(*spoke in French*)

The Republic of Mauritius is a crucible of civilizations and cultures. We are proud to be a haven of peace, where people of various backgrounds and traditions live together in harmony. The people of Mauritius are inspired by the philosophy of multiculturalism and consider their diversity to be a rich human resource. Based on the vision expressed in our motto, "Unity, equality and modernity", we have committed to place humanity at the centre of all development in our pluralistic society — a society based on diversity, respect for cultural individuality, non-discrimination and sharing common values.

The United Nations is the pre-eminent forum for intercultural dialogue. My country will fully play its part in the combined global effort for all human beings to enjoy the consideration and respect that are their birthright.

(*spoke in English*)

Finally, I should like to reaffirm Mauritius' unwavering faith in the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace, security and development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Mr. Mladenov (Bulgaria): Every year we come together in this great Hall of the United Nations, to

reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism. Nations big and small, rich and poor, gather from the four corners of the world here at the United Nations, driven by the conviction that, if we work together, we will find solutions to the challenges of today and tomorrow. As these challenges grow and become more interconnected, so grows our conviction that only through cooperation and dialogue can we resolve them. This is the fundamental belief with which, for 55 years, the Bulgarian delegation, like many others, has come to the United Nations.

Like every day, today will be unique, because our actions on this day will forge our tomorrows. We can spend our time dwelling on the past, or we can invest our time in the future that we will all face together. Today, our world faces a complicated web of challenges, but also of opportunities. We face the challenge of addressing global climate change by creating opportunities for sustainable development. We face the challenge of reducing the conflicts and opportunities that come from providing sufficient clean water to millions of people. We face the challenge of developing an ethical market economy and the countless opportunities that will emerge from reducing the poverty gap. We face the challenge of reducing ethnic conflicts, terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the opportunities that come from good governance, democracy and freedom. We may also, perhaps, address the most paramount challenge of our time: to prove wrong all those who believe that the world is heading towards an irreversible clash of civilizations — because none of the global challenges that we face today can be understood, tackled or addressed without respect for different opinions, without dialogue between faiths and without adherence to the global values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

(*spoke in French*)

On behalf of the Government of Bulgaria, I congratulate Mr. Deiss on the assumption of the presidency of this Assembly at this sixty-fifth session. Our appreciation also goes to Mr. Ali Treki for his leadership during the previous session, and to Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his efforts to strengthen and promote the United Nations.

(*spoke in English*)

Let me begin by welcoming the results of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Regardless of the fact that efforts to achieve the MDGs have not stayed on course, their attainment is still within our reach. Reaffirming the principle of solidarity between those who have and those who need is of the essence. My country faces challenges imposed by the global economic and financial crisis. We have, however, committed ourselves to develop our own donor capacity, and so we shall. We shall do so, because Bulgaria — like a number of countries that have joined the European Union (EU) since the fall of the Berlin Wall — understands that the solidarity that was extended to us now needs to be extended by us to those less fortunate. To be effective, we shall work in close coordination with our partners, avoid duplication and aim at addressing the root causes — not the symptoms — of today's problems. Otherwise, we will not be building a better tomorrow. In this effort the role of the United Nations will always remain vitally important, particularly in helping to mitigate the development impact of the crisis on the less developed and most vulnerable countries.

As dangerous as the current global crisis is, it also gives us a chance to green our economies, particularly by putting them on a sustainable and low-carbon path. This year, 2010, has been proclaimed as the International Year of Biodiversity. Economic growth and the preservation of the environment must go hand-in-hand across the globe. Today there can be no excuses — neither in developed countries, nor in developing countries — because any excuse that we find today will cost us more tomorrow. That is why Bulgaria believes that the United Nations must be given the tools to respond adequately to the increasing challenges of environmental protection.

Today, much more so than in the past, we see increased demand and pressure on international humanitarian efforts. The devastating earthquake in Haiti last year killed hundreds of thousands and left a staggering 20 per cent of the population homeless. Haiti's call was, however, heeded throughout the globe. Allow me to praise the work of the United Nations and its agencies in responding quickly, but also pay tribute to all of the countries, non governmental organizations and individuals who came quickly to Haiti's assistance. The Bulgarian Government and people were quick to respond by providing financial and in kind assistance, including educational opportunities to young Haitians whose universities had been destroyed.

This year we have to help in the struggle of the 20 million people in Pakistan who have been affected by the terrible floods that have wrecked lives, ruined crops and destroyed economic opportunities. The Secretary-General and the United Nations were swift to react and deserve praise for their efforts, as does the rapid reaction of the European Union, the United States, India and other partners around the world. Allow me to use this forum to call on all to strengthen their efforts in assisting the people of Pakistan. However, I also call on Governments across the globe to help in removing barriers, so as to assist the Pakistani economy in its recovery. Helping today and creating opportunities tomorrow — that should be our goal in a country that is vital to global stability and security. In this, let me assure you that Bulgaria will also shoulder its share of the needed solidarity. Already the Government and the Bulgarian Red Cross have launched a nation-wide campaign to raise funds and contribute to the rebuilding efforts in Pakistan.

No matter how successful we are in our development and humanitarian efforts, the benefits cannot fully be borne in an insecure and unstable environment. Allow me to briefly look closer to home — the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean. The European Union was created to make war impossible in a continent that has seen at least a century of conflicts. In Europe, however, we have unfinished business. Europe will not be whole and complete until our neighbours in the Balkans join our Union. It falls on us — those who joined the European Union late, not by their own choice, but because of the ideological divisions of the cold war — to say it loud and clear: to make war impossible in the Balkans we must see all countries that have emerged from the former Yugoslavia become part of the European Union. This is our historic mission. It is our destiny.

Bulgaria, which has struggled with its own transition and accession to the European Union, knows the benefits and the challenges best. That is why today I am proud to stand here and commend the General Assembly for unanimously adopting resolution 64/298, approving the joint EU Serbia compromise text on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the declaration of independence by Kosovo. Bulgaria supported it wholeheartedly, because we firmly believe that dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is key, both to the stability of the region and to the European perspective of our neighbours. It will be a difficult process, charged with emotion and scarred by history, but it will be a process that can today lay the foundations of a better tomorrow for all. It is a process that the Bulgarian Government is not just willing, but eager to support, and will lend all necessary assistance to the efforts of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the international community faces many challenges, but the struggle between the fears of yesterday and the opportunities of tomorrow can be resolved today by the people of Bosnia themselves. Bulgaria will, more actively than ever, contribute to this reconciliation, because we believe that our role in South-Eastern Europe and beyond is to bring people together, not divide them; to seek solutions, not to watch from the sidelines.

We must constantly reaffirm our commitment to bring our neighbours in the Western Balkans into the European Union when they meet the criteria for membership. But our neighbours also must reaffirm their own commitment to undertaking often very difficult reforms and strengthening regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations.

There are cynics who say that the world cannot live together, that for peace to exist we must build walls of separation between peoples, religions and ethnic communities; cynics who say that civilizations must clash. I come from a country that is in a turbulent part of the world, yet we have managed to prove that people of different religions — Christians, Muslims and Jews, and of different ethnicities — Bulgarians, Turks and Armenians, can live together.

Bulgaria has seen stellar moments in its history, for example, when civil society rose during the Second World War and refused to allow its Jewish population to be sent to concentration camps, or when it integrated its Turkish population after the end of communism. But, it has also seen its dark moments — when it failed to save the Jewish populations of occupied Northern Greece and Vardar Macedonia, or when the Communist regime expelled a large part of our Muslim citizens to Turkey. Our history has taught us to be able to distinguish between good and bad. Our history proves that the cynics are wrong, that people can live together in peace.

That is why Bulgaria cannot remain uninterested in the Middle East. We believe that, just as the Jewish

people have a homeland in the State of Israel, so the Palestinian people have the right to an independent State of Palestine that lives in peace with its neighbours. During the past months we have all witnessed the efforts of the United States Administration to restart the direct negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. Many of us have made passionate speeches on the need and urgency of peace. Today, the Palestinian and Israeli leaders face the historic challenge of looking to tomorrow and not being tied down by yesterday. The Middle East cannot afford a failed peace process. The world cannot afford a peace process that does not have a comprehensive end goal in sight.

Today we must all recognize that hard decisions are called for and lend our full support to President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu to help them walk the hard road to peace. Obstacles should be overcome and preconditions should be removed. If the leaders of Palestine believe that settlement policy is an obstacle to peace, the leaders of Israel must refrain from such activities in order to give peace a chance. If the leaders of Israel believe that no preconditions to a final settlement should be put in place, then the Palestinian leaders must refrain from such actions in order to give peace a chance.

The choice today is not between peace negotiations and economic development, because peace and prosperity go hand in hand. No one should feel singled out or left behind, because the enemies of peace are many — those who feel that walls are safer than bridges and those who feel that religions cannot coexist. You can take away a man's life, but you ultimately cannot take away his faith or dignity.

This is why I call on all Members of the United Nations to stand firmly behind the efforts of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to achieve peace. In doing this, we must recognize the legitimate concerns of both sides — Israel's security and the viability of a Palestinian State.

In this effort we should not forget the 1.5 million people who live in Gaza — Palestinians who have the right to a better life, just like the children of Sderot have the right to go to school without the threat of rockets. We have an obligation to help open up access to Gaza without compromising the security of Israel. History has proven that isolation and deprivation breed radicalism, and it is in the interest of peace that more opportunities be created.

Today the world faces other grave security challenges that will shape our tomorrow. We must reconfirm our commitment to halting the spread of nuclear weapons. This mission is above politics, diplomacy, national ambitions and personal egos. It is our universal obligation and a joint commitment that we undertook 40 years ago. Bulgaria believes that every nation must put a strengthened Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) at the centre of its national diplomacy. The uncovering of clandestine nuclear networks has brought the spectre of non State actors equipped with weapons of mass destruction closer. We must not allow this to happen. All nations must recognize that the nuclear non proliferation regime is undermined if violators are allowed to act with impunity. We consider all States parties, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to be bound by their NPT obligations.

Leaving the NPT cannot be without consequences. Justified concerns, however, remain also about the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We call on Iran to deploy the necessary confidence-building measures to provide for greater transparency on its nuclear activities. Bulgaria believes that it is important to find a diplomatic solution. The recent efforts by Turkey and Brazil illustrate that there is will in the international community for dialogue. Therefore, a swift return to the negotiation table and full compliance with United Nations Security Council resolutions, as well as International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) standards and safeguards is a must.

International terrorism is one of the most serious contemporary threats to global peace and security. It cannot be justified by any political, philosophical, ideological, racial or ethnic considerations, nor by any ideology. The end goal of terrorism is to hinder our efforts to guarantee human rights, basic freedoms and democracy. Within the framework of the European Union, Bulgaria has endorsed the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. I appeal for a prompt finalization of the negotiations to reach a comprehensive convention on counter-terrorism.

An old nefarious practice has re-emerged on the high seas — piracy. Bulgaria has been directly affected by the escalating activities and audacity of the pirates

in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia. The fight against piracy leaves much to be desired, however. We need a firm international legal framework for the trial, detention and imprisonment of persons suspected of having committed acts of piracy. We need coordinated actions on the high seas to protect our shipping. Perhaps most of all, we need to address the root causes of piracy — poverty, isolation and lack of opportunity.

In Afghanistan, we face a threat that demands the continued military and civilian commitment on the part of the international community, which hinges on two important factors. Firstly, the ability of the Afghan Government to pave the way for reconciliation, tackle corruption and deliver services to its people and the renewed commitment of the international community and regional neighbours to strengthen the Afghan National Security Forces, while maintaining the pressure on radicals and insurgents and limiting their scope of action.

In these tasks the coordinated efforts of all, but foremost of the United Nations, NATO and the European Union, are vital. I would like to strongly support the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, in Afghanistan. Their efforts should be appreciated and fully supported by the international community. I want to also pay tribute to the brave men and women of all International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) contributing nations, including the roughly 600 Bulgarian troops, who risk their lives to bring security to the people of Afghanistan.

Bulgaria's commitment to the future of Afghanistan is unfaltering, because we understand that it is our joint obligation to bring security to that tortured country, whose people deserve to be able to enjoy the freedoms and opportunities that many of us have. Bulgaria has increased its input to ISAF, including through more training units, which will work to build the capacity of the Afghan security forces. We continue to support the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan, which, jointly with NATO's Training Mission, plays an important role. We support the Afghan Government's peace and reintegration programme, in which the key role should be played by the Afghan State. Our commitment to Afghanistan is based on our firm belief that, if we succeed today, we will all live safer tomorrow.

A comprehensive security system can rest only on a robust partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations. This is why Bulgaria believes that the partnership between the European Union and the United Nations is a strategic one. As the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, put it, "Our commitment to the multilateral system of global governance through the UN and other bodies is clear" and we work "with conviction and clarity on the major challenges that face us, be they climate change, poverty, conflict or terrorism".

The transformation of the EU into a legal subject of international relations after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon has to be adequately reflected in a resolution of the General Assembly regarding the representation of the EU at the United Nations.

In closing, let me briefly touch on the reform of the United Nations. Bulgaria is convinced that if we are to effectively tackle the challenges of tomorrow, we must continuously adapt and improve the United Nations system. Therefore it is imperative that we continue the course of reforms initiated by the 2005 World Summit.

We believe that the reform of the Security Council is part of a comprehensive agenda for change at the United Nations. Bulgaria declares itself in favour of an enlargement of the Security Council capable of generating the largest possible consensus. In that context, Bulgaria has endorsed the enlargement of the Council in its two categories — permanent and non permanent members.

I started by reiterating our firm commitment to multilateralism. The agenda of the United Nations is broad and diverse, and I have attempted, on behalf of the Government of Bulgaria, to briefly touch on just some of the issues that ought to be discussed in this forum.

Our commitment to multilateralism can be equalled only by our unfaltering belief that dialogue and diplomacy can achieve more than can confrontation and war. More than half a century ago, the United Nations came together and enshrined those principles as the cornerstones of international law. Since then, with varying degrees of success, we have attempted to live by them. It is time for us to realize that the global challenges of tomorrow can be tackled only by collective action today. Nothing is impossible,

but only if we work together, discuss, disagree and agree, but share a goal — a peaceful and prosperous world that is safe for all.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Osman Mohammed Saleh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea.

Mr. Saleh (Eritrea): Let me start by extending my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, and your country, Switzerland, for your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. I am confident that with your extensive experience and diplomatic skill, you will lead this session to a successful conclusion. I pledge the support of the Eritrean delegation in your noble efforts for the common good. I wish also to commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, President of the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, for his excellent leadership. He indeed served us well. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki moon for his leadership and his report on the work of our United Nations at the outset of this general debate (see A/65/PV.11).

We meet again, at this sixty-fifth session of the Assembly, to expound on the state of our individual countries and to reflect on regional, continental and global affairs. We come to this gathering year after year to share our thoughts and explain our positions on some issues of interest. Yet we realize that the outcome of our deliberations and resolutions falls far short of our own expectations, let alone the aspirations of humanity. We agree that the institutions and procedures of this Organization have long outlived their time, and yet we remain paralysed in our efforts to transform the United Nations.

While the prospects for a rapid reform of the United Nations system appear to be dim, we cannot and will not give up. We have to continue to speak out and work tirelessly for a United Nations that is fit for the twenty-first century and for a more just and equitable world. At the same time, we have to focus on our own nations and regions to ensure a peaceful and stable environment and a dignified life for our peoples. It is that perspective that informs Eritrea's policies at the national, regional and international levels.

Internationally, Eritrea seeks, through robust and constructive engagement, to make its modest contribution to global peace, security, justice and equity and to the protection and enhancement of the environment in the face of changes that threaten the very survival of humanity.

Regionally, Eritrea's efforts are directed at securing peace, stability, development and cooperation in the wider Horn of Africa and the Red Sea regions. We endeavour to contribute to transforming our dangerous neighbourhood, a neighbourhood mired in numerous conflicts, into a cooperative and peaceful region. In that connection, I wish to touch upon some of Eritrea's immediate concerns.

In regard to the Sudan, Eritrea is working closely with the Sudanese parties and with regional and international actors as the country enters a critical period in its history. Eritrea believes that the international community as a whole needs to wholeheartedly support the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement as they approach the momentous referendum date in January 2011, and beyond. Irrespective of the outcome of the referendum, relations of trust and cooperation between the parties are crucial for peace and stability, not only in the north and south, but throughout the region. For all those reasons, we ought to encourage the parties to reach agreement on the post referendum issues and relations as soon as is feasible. There is also a need to simultaneously help the protagonists in the Darfur conflict to finally reach an agreement within the context of the Doha talks that are set to resume in the next few days.

On Somalia, it is Eritrea's considered view, borne out by the bitter experience and spiralling violence of the past two decades, that there can be no military solution to the problem in Somalia. While that conviction by now is widely shared in the international community, serious doubts continue to be raised as to whether the alternative — that is, a Somali-owned and Somali-driven, inclusive political process — is possible and practicable.

Eritrea does not by any means believe or suggest that that is easy or that it can lead to immediate results. It will undoubtedly be a complex and protracted process, but ultimately achievable. For, even in the past two turbulent decades, Somalis have more than once demonstrated that, given the right environment, they are capable of finding home-grown solutions to their problems. Eritrea therefore urges the United Nations and all those concerned with peace and stability in Somalia to earnestly engage all Somalis and to give the

political process the serious and sustained attention it deserves.

I turn next to the matter of Eritrea and Ethiopia. While the United Nations grapples with the Sudan and Somalia, it continues to ignore the grave consequences of Ethiopia's continued occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory, eight years after the ruling of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission and three years after the Commission ended its work by depositing with the United Nations the demarcation of the boundary between the two countries.

Ethiopia's illegal occupation and the United Nations silence, which mean the continuation of the conflict, are exacting a heavy price on the peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia and are complicating the regional situation. I wish to remind the United Nations that Eritrea awaits responsible and urgent action to end Ethiopia's violation of international law and its threat to regional peace and security.

Eritrea's constructive engagement on regional and international matters stems from its firm conviction that a conducive external environment is essential for nation-building. As Eritrea enters its twentieth year of independence, it remains focused on broad-based and people-centred political, economic, social and cultural development that will afford a life of dignity and prosperity to our people. After several years of consistent investments in health, education, agriculture and other essential infrastructure, we have created a solid basis for sustained economic growth. It is expected that trade and domestic and foreign investment will provide additional impetus for the growth of our economy. I wish to seize this opportunity to extend an invitation to all interested countries and their enterprises to become our partners in development.

The President (spoke in French): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pastor Micha Ondo Bile, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and la Francophonie of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Micha Ondo Bile (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the great honour to speak at the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President and head of State of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, who is not able to be here to participate, as he would have liked, owing to numerous high matters of State.

In the name of the Government and the people of Equatorial Guinea, I would first like to address our most sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous and wise election as President of the General Assembly at this session. We wish you great success in leading its work and deliberations. I also extend our thanks to the other elected members of the Bureau. Most especially, we wish to express our admiration and respect to His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, outgoing President and eminent diplomat of Africa, who did outstanding work as President at the sixty-fourth session and who is responsible for our beginning this session with optimism.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea reaffirms its resolute commitment and attachment to the ideals, principles and objectives of the United Nations. In that context, I salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and reiterate to him the recognition of the Government and people of Equatorial Guinea of his wise administration at the head of this great Organization. In particular, we appreciate his vision and the timeliness with which he has identified the seven strategic themes of our current world, which merit the greatest attention from every State Member during this session.

Equatorial Guinea is taking part in the work of this session with a good deal of optimism with regard to an eventual and gradual solution of the problems today facing humankind in general, and the African continent in particular. Above all, that is because since the 1990s there have been several initiatives aimed at encouraging sustainable development. Those initiatives have been promoted through major world conferences and summits that have addressed such major subjects as population and sustainable development, food, the environment and financing for development. In the context of this 2010 session, we shall consider the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of those major summits and conferences, such as the Millennium Summit.

What can we see after more than 10 years since those summits, especially the Millennium Summit? As has been wisely pointed out in previous interventions in the Assembly, there is no point in doing things in the same way and expecting different results.

Unfortunately, both the report of the Secretary-General (A/65/1) and the interventions delivered in recent days by different delegations during the High-

level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals indicate that rather than improving, the number of people who suffer from hunger has increased, the number of those living in poverty remains high and the environment has been degraded. The latter has led to serious climactic changes and the ensuing natural disasters, including constant flooding, earthquakes, hurricanes and so on, which have caused total destruction in several countries and seriously undermined people's ability to survive.

Were that not enough, there has also been an increase in acts of international terrorism, organized and cross-border crime and piracy on a continental level. There has also been a worsening in the acute economic crisis, which continues to affect all humankind. All those phenomena illustrate the need for greater awareness and coordination on the part of every country on the planet.

All of us must focus our efforts, energy and resources on promoting and maintaining peace and security in the world, fostering a healthy environment and actively working and cooperating to eradicate nuclear weapons and to forcefully combat terrorism and international organized crime. We should work side by side to shape a world where there is a sense of participation and equality among men and women; a world where Security Council reform allows for better representation, participation and decision-taking that reflect the will and interests of every region and country of the world — large, medium or small.

Previous interventions have underscored the importance that "every Member country of the United Nations be clearly involved here, at the heart of the United Nations, to respond to urgent matters of today's world". It was that call that, in 2007, inspired His Excellency the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to propose to the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — UNESCO — the creation of an international prize for scientific investigation in the field of life sciences. That $3 million contribution is destined for the international scientific community, and its purpose is to seek solutions and remedies to the major pandemics and diseases that afflict the world today in general and especially the African continent.

Despite the great need of the international scientific community, despite the potential to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable communities, particularly in Africa, despite having been duly approved by the States members of the UNESCO Executive Board, and despite the unanimous decision of the international jury for the prize designating three international scientists, most of them from developing countries, as winners, this prize is still being blocked simply for being the initiative of an African leader.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea cannot but denounce the manipulations and manoeuvres of the new UNESCO administration against the humanitarian initiative of the people of Equatorial Guinea. As a State member, we find it unprecedented and therefore disturbing that a decision made by the Executive Board of a United Nations agency is not carried out by its leadership. What is most disturbing is that clear manipulations and injustices of certain undeclared interests have become apparent even in the heart of the United Nations-related organizations, as is, unfortunately, the case with UNESCO, where we believed that all the member States had the same consideration and rights.

For all of those reasons, the people and Government of Equatorial Guinea agree that this is the appropriate occasion and place to once more express their deep concern regarding the irresponsible, openly unjust and racist attitude that some actors, masked as non governmental organizations, are orchestrating against the praiseworthy initiative and the humanitarian intentions that led to the creation of the UNESCO Obiang Nguema Mbasogo Prize to motivate and encourage the action of scientists around the world in research for the preservation of life.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea asks that the UNESCO Obiang Nguema Mbasogo International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences come to fruition without further delay, in accordance with decision 180 EX/57, which was adopted by consensus by all the States members of the UNESCO Executive Board in October 2008.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is an independent and sovereign State, governed by a democratic and pluralist political system that respects the basic rights of people without racial, ethnic, gender or religious discrimination. Those principles are contained in the fundamental law and in the laws that serve as the basis for our country's legal system, which guarantees and promotes the individual and collective freedoms of the citizens of Equatorial Guinea and

provides for punishment for offenders who could violate the rule of law. Indeed, the Constitution of Equatorial Guinea reserves an important and privileged place for human rights and basic freedoms, inasmuch as they are based on the United Nations Charter and their principles and goals are inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Therefore, our country has begun a reform of its judicial system and has already ratified several international agreements and treaties concerning the promotion and protection of human rights, which have come to be an integral part of our legal system. Likewise, in the last 10 years the Government has made significant progress in updating and adapting its legislative, legal and administrative instruments with regard to the promotion and protection of civil and political rights, as well as social, economic and cultural rights.

In addition to those enormous and ongoing efforts, the Government of Equatorial Guinea has taken several other relevant measures and provisions to strengthen the implementation of the laws in force in the country in order to promote human rights and the rule of law. A particular instance is the recent enactment of the new Organic Law of Judicial Power, which determines the overall organization of the judicial system and the operation of justice in Equatorial Guinea.

In recent years, the world's nations have witnessed an intensification and increase of violence in acts of terrorism, in particular starting with the tragedy that took place in this beautiful and historic North American city of New York on 11 September 2001. Such acts have meant that the fight against terrorism has become a one of the priorities of international and national policy of all countries.

In that disturbing context, the United Nations and international law have been defining a set of very strict obligations that States must comply with in order to ensure an effective fight against that global scourge, which affects all States equally, irrespective of nationality or borders. In particular, we must bear in mind resolution 1373 (2001), and other related resolutions of the Security Council, which represents an important milestone with regard to international standards in the fight against terrorism. Indeed, that resolution is a general standard and imposes upon States a set of obligations that include that of criminalizing specific conducts, such as the financing of terrorism or the recruitment of members of terrorist groups. Consequently, the implementation of international standards in the fight against terrorism and, in particular, its criminal classification, is not merely a decision of domestic criminal policy, but rather a matter of compliance with obligations imposed by international law in general.

Our country has been a victim of terrorist attacks on several occasions in the past five years, and as a result the Government of Equatorial Guinea has put the fight against terrorism among the priorities of its Action Plan for national development, while at the same time condemning in the most vigorous terms all acts of terrorism, regardless of their motivation or origin, since those acts constitute one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

Equatorial Guinea remains loyal to its commitments and is deeply convinced of the need to continue the efforts it has been deploying in connection with the Millennium Declaration and in harmony with the purposes and principles of the United Nations aimed at overcoming the many challenges of development.

However, the current situation requires a closer and more dynamic, effective, sincere and coordinated cooperation, without any conditions, as well as the coordinated and united support of all of the political forces of developed, developing and least developed countries, with a view to promoting shared prosperity and a better future for all the world's countries.

I would like to conclude my statement on behalf of the Government of Equatorial Guinea by renewing our strong desire to change the current concept and management of international affairs — in which the often exclusive attitudes of certain States and regions can be discerned — through a firmer and more sincere commitment of the entire international community in favour of the current United Nations reform process which is designed to strengthen multilateralism. Only in that way can we establish solid and lasting bases for a world of peace and security — a prosperous world for today and a solid inheritance for future generations.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.